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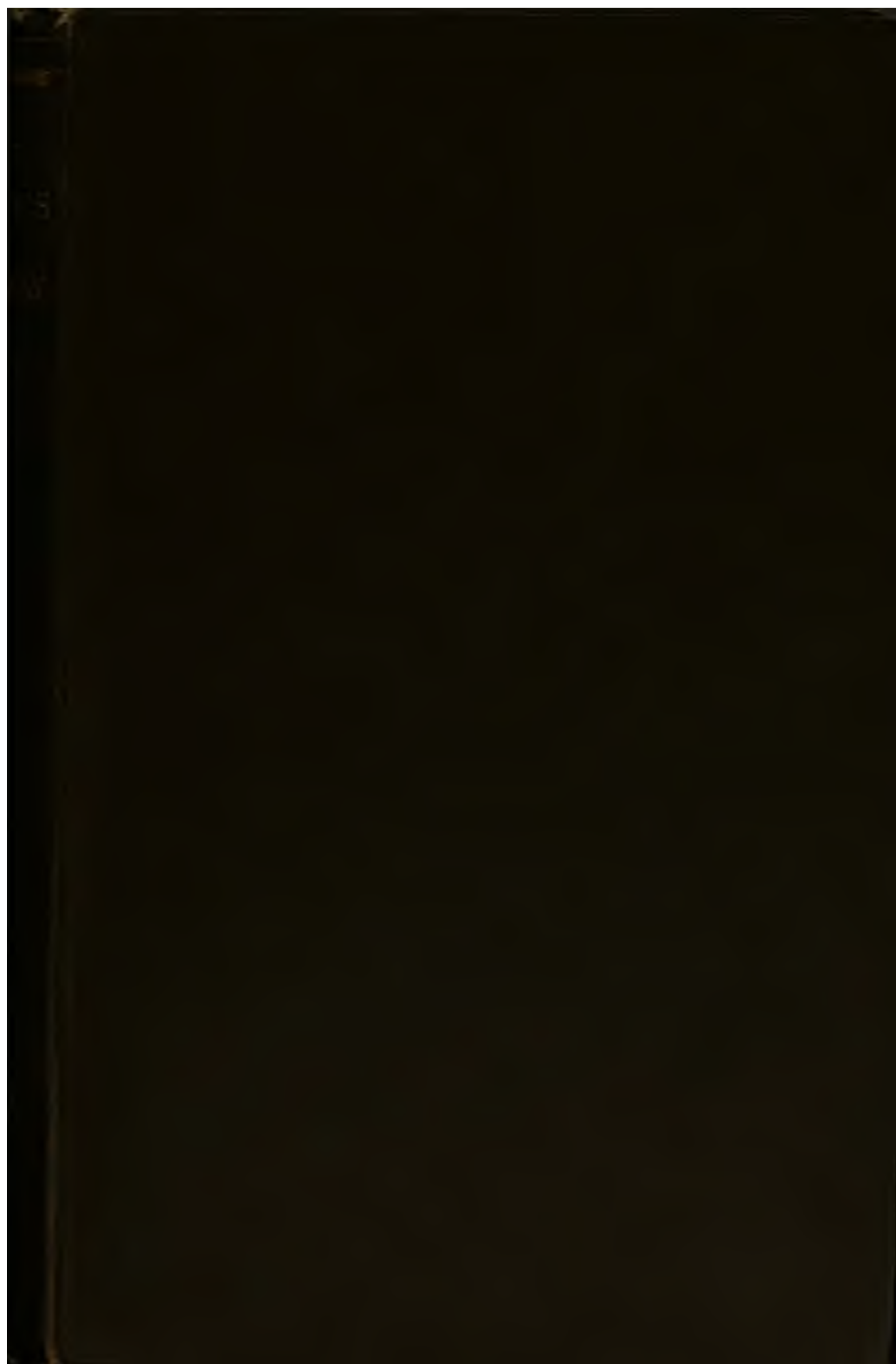
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# SOME HERETICS OF YESTERDAY

BY

S. E. HERRICK, D. D.

MINISTER OF MT. VERNON CHURCH, BOSTON



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**This page**  
**OF HONOR AND AFFECTION**  
**I HAVE WRITTEN LAST,**  
**THAT I MIGHT INSCRIBE IT, WITHOUT HER KNOWLEDGE,**  
**TO THE MOST FAITHFUL**  
**AND YET MOST KINDLY OF CRITICS,**  
**MY WIFE,**  
**UNDER WHOSE PATIENT SCRUTINY**  
**EVERY PAGE OF MY BOOK**  
**HAS PASSED.**

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## PREFACE.

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LEST some reader should be disappointed in the contents of the present volume, let me briefly say by way of preface that no new facts are brought to light in the following pages; they are old stories simply retold — not for students — but for the young men and women of the Congregation to which it is my privilege to minister, and whom I am trying to train, from Sunday to Sunday, in the Christian graces of Faith, Hope, and Charity, and in that Kingdom which is “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

The several chapters were prepared from week to week and delivered as a course of Sunday Evening Lectures during the last winter, with no thought of publication until the last one had been given. Indeed such a purpose, arising at an earlier day, would have suggested a preparation so protracted and thorough as to preclude the possibility of producing them at intervals so brief. Nor would they now be committed to the types but for the strenuous entreaty of my people.

The Luther celebrations of last autumn turned the minds of men anew, throughout the Christian world,

to that great revolt against traditionalism and authority which we call the Reformation. To show that the revolt neither began nor ended with Luther — if indeed it can be said to be finished yet; to follow it in its gradual development in principle and trace it in its geographical and national expansion; at the same time to exhibit it concretely in the lives of its leaders, and so to bring the reader into a personal sympathy with them and awaken an interest in personal investigation; is the object which I have endeavored to accomplish. And yet, I should not be content, if I could feel that only this were attained. The great Protestants of the past have gained comparatively little for the world, if they have not established for all succeeding ages the indefectible right to question even their authority, and the perpetual privilege of intellectual readjustment. In other words, a traditional Protestantism has no more right to a claim of infallibility than a traditional ecclesiasticism.

Every age that the world has seen so far has been prefatory; it is hardly probable that the present age is final. The five centuries from the birth of Tauler to the death of Wesley (1290–1791) are unified by a visible progress of religious thought and of spiritual life. There is no good reason for supposing that the lines along which that progress has developed have yet found their termini. It may be said of these “Heretics of Yesterday,” as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews says of the worthies of the Ancient Jewish Church: “These all having obtained a good report

through faith, received not the promise; God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Nor shall we be perfected without the work and attainment, the broader light and clearer knowledge, of the coming years.

MT. VERNON CHURCH, BOSTON, *July*, 1884.



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## I.

### TAULER AND THE MYSTICS.

A. D. 1290-1361.

CURIOUS it is to observe how these Common-sense Philosophers, men who brag chiefly of their irrefragable logic, and keep watch and ward, as if this were their special trade, against 'Mysticism,' and 'Visionary Theories,' are themselves obliged to base their whole system on Mysticism, and a Theory ; on Faith, in short, and that of a very comprehensive kind ; the Faith, namely, either that man's Senses are themselves Divine, or that they afford not only an honest, but a *literal* representation of the workings of some Divinity. So true is it that for these men also, all knowledge of the visible rests on belief of the invisible and derives its first meaning and certainty therefrom. — CARLYLE, *Essay on Novalis*.



## SOME HERETICS OF YESTERDAY.

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### I.

#### TAULER AND THE MYSTICS.

A. D. 1290-1361.

MAN'S religion, like himself, combines the seen and temporal with the unseen and eternal. The soul, or spirit, or unseen reality of religion, is something entirely distinct from the visible form in which it is embodied. The two may exist apart, but the normal condition is that of combination in balance and harmony and mutual helpfulness. Religion may exist only as a corpse ; and it may exist also only as a disembodied spirit. There may be only the visible appearance, the phenomena of churches and dogmas and sacraments and sermons, without any interior and spiritual reality. There have been, as we know, not only individuals, but whole communities and long ages, in which this has been the case, when religion has been like the fair shell of a nut in which the kernel has completely decayed. And, on the other hand, there may be religion which takes on little or no visible manifestation, no church, no human ministry, no formulated creed, no sacraments, nothing save the spiritual intercourse between man and his God. But as in the human constitution body and soul are intended

to exert a mutual influence, each working healthfully and helpfully upon the other, — the body giving utterance and expression to the soul and carrying out its purposes and desires, and the soul animating the body and informing it with grace and beauty, — so also is the intent in all religion. All form is to the end of spiritual life and vigor, and spiritual life is in order to outward influence and fruitfulness. But neither in man nor in his religion are the twain often found in perfect balance. The one or the other is likely to preponderate, and in both cases the flesh tends to get the upper hand of the spirit, and to tyrannize over it. Then comes the necessity for a protest and a reaction to restore the normal relation; and in this fact lies the whole meaning of Protestantism, in whatever age it appears and whatever the temporary form it takes. Matthew Arnold, in his recent lecture on Emerson, said that "Mr. Emerson's great work lay in this, that he was the friend and aider of those who would live in the spirit," which is but another way of saying that Mr. Emerson was a mystic. For mysticism is not an *ism*, but an effort. It has not to do so much with doctrine as with life. It is not a revolt from theory or from prevalent belief, but from materialism in practice and conduct. Hence it is not peculiar to any one age or church or country, but is found in all times and under all ecclesiastical and theological systems, and under the religions of paganism as well as under that of Christianity. Perhaps it is impossible to construct a formula for mysticism that shall be brief, concise, and adequate, and so answer the demands of a definition, as it certainly is impossible to find one. The more, because the thing itself has always been a reaction from formula. It is

one of those spiritual things which may be spiritually discerned, wherever it appears, but which transcend the limitations of words. You may chase it through the dictionary, but you will not capture it there; the network of words is as incapable of holding it as are the meshes of a seine to retain a wave of the sea. I suspect that the first mystic of whom we have any record was Enoch, and that the four words which give us his whole biography come nearer to a true definition than any attempt that has since been made by theologians or philosophers, "*Enoch walked with God.*" That such solitary prominence should have been given to the name of one man among a multitude of others in that far-off age beyond the flood indicates that he was distinguished from his fellows in some such way as Prince Gautama was in India, as Confucius was in China, as Socrates was in Greece, and as in after times Tauler and his companions were in Germany, Fénelon in France, and the Wesleys in England. There is discernible in them all the same craving to get above the low and unspiritual level of their respective times, to break away from the formalism and perfunctoriness of the average religious life, to find a union with God which shall be as real as the common relationships of daily life.

It was in that darkest time that is just before day that the German mystics arose. It was not yet the dawn of the Reformation. These men were preparers of the way; voices crying in the wilderness, as John the Baptist heralded the coming of Christ. Tauler was the forerunner of Luther, though he did his work solely with reference to the call of present duty, all unconscious and unsuspecting of the bright future to which that work was leading up the German people.

But very little is known of his earlier days, save that he was born the son of a wealthy family in the city of Strasburg, in the year 1290. At the age of eighteen, he betook himself to a religious life. That expression now does not mean that a man leaves the work-bench or the counter, or any honest and respectable calling. We live in the happy day in which religion is understood to possess and sanctify any useful calling, in which it is as holy and as God-approved a work to make shoes or sell calico as it is to translate the Scriptures or go on a mission to the heathen. But not so then. To enter upon a religious life meant to join some order of monks, to renounce, at least outwardly, the employments and enjoyments of the world and live in the convent. Shortly after his renunciation of the world he proceeded to Paris, which was at that time the great centre of Christian learning, and where able professors were expounding to thousands of students the philosophy of Aristotle and the speculations of the Schoolmen. It was the characteristic doctrine of scholasticism that Christianity was a mere objective phenomenon, to be looked at and studied simply as a movement of history. That it was also an inward life was well-nigh forgotten. God and Christ were banished from human sympathies; men studied and speculated upon the divine nature as one might peer at the sun through a telescope from the snow-covered summit of a mountain, where its life-giving warmth is unfelt. Religious thought was purely speculative and religious life as purely in externals, and in neither of these could Tauler find much satisfaction. It was life, not logic, that he longed for. He turned over the huge volumes with an eager mind and a yearning heart, but found not what he sought. It

was like looking through window-panes upon which the dust of years had settled and over which generations of spiders had spun their webs, while he longed for open vision. In after years when he had become the preacher of a living gospel, this student-life at Paris seemed, when he remembered it, to fill him with disgust. "Those great masters at Paris," he says, "do read vast books and turn over the leaves with great diligence, which is a very good thing; but spiritually enlightened men read the true living book, wherein all things live; they turn over the pages of the heavens and the earth and read therein the mighty and admirable wonders of God." But dry and frigid and unsatisfactory to him as all this logic-chopping of the schools was, it probably was not without an indirect benefit. It made him feel still more keenly a hunger for spiritual realities. It prepared him to welcome the light still more eagerly when the light should come. And come it did. On returning from Paris to Strasburg to take up his work as a preaching friar, not well knowing as yet what he had to preach, he fell in with a distinguished brother of his own order, who was teaching the people in their own language, with great enthusiasm. He was mighty in the doctrines of the Schoolmen, but along with his metaphysics he gave the hungry people much of the Scripture story, in a popular and pictorial form, turning it into parables and allegories, teaching them withal the evil of sin, and the necessity of being at one with God. This Master Eckart produced a great impression upon Tauler, and seems to have firmly settled him in the truth that was then dawning upon the world, that "outward rites and observances are not necessary to the essence of piety." This truth Tauler took up and



carried forward and supplemented. He taught likewise that outward rites and observances are not necessary to the essence of piety, but he added also this, that true piety is in the application of religious principles to real life. He showed that piety had its positive as well as its negative aspect; what it is, as well as what it is not. "One can spin," he says, "another can make shoes; and all these are gifts of the Holy Ghost. I tell you, if I were not a priest, I would esteem it a great gift that I was able to make shoes, and would try to make them so well as to be a pattern to all." "The measure with which we shall be measured is the faculty of love in the soul, — the will of a man; by this shall all his life and works be measured."

Truth has ever its counterfeit, even as substance its shadow; and the mysticism which was springing up in the minds of thoughtful people was accompanied by its grotesque imitations and burlesques. There were not wanting men who were ready, then as now, to turn the truth of God into a lie, and make His grace a cloak for licentiousness. Even in our own day there are men who, whether from constitutional inability or from willful perversion, make no distinction between faith and presumption, between inward freedom of the spirit and lawlessness, between an easy conscience and holiness. So this resurrection of true faith was accompanied by the upspringing of the Brethren and Sisters of the Free Spirit, as they called themselves. Tauler himself felt the hindrance which they imposed upon the truth, and, though charitable and gracious in his disposition, handled them without gloves whenever the opportunity offered. "These Free Spirits," he says, "strive after a false freedom, and, on pretext of following the inward light, follow only the inclinations of their own nature."

It would not be possible for me to give, within the compass of a brief lecture, any adequate and discriminating review of the character and results of the mysticism of the fourteenth century. I must content myself with quoting from Mr. Vaughan a single sentence: "The memorable step of progress (made by Tauler and his companions) is briefly indicated by saying that they substituted the idea of the *immanence* of God in the world for the idea of the *emanation* of the world from God."<sup>1</sup> And it is easy to see how this new thought — an old thought now, and one that has grown very precious to the Christian world — would, in its first freshness and impressiveness, be likely to be perverted and parodied and made the pretext both for theoretical error and vicious practice. "All things are in God and all things are God," said Master Eckart. "All creatures *in themselves* are naught: all creatures are a speaking or utterance of God." "Simple people conceive that we are to see God as if He stood on that side and we on this. It is not so; God and I are one in the act of my perceiving Him." It is easy to see how such statements as these could be misconstrued and perverted; how they might be interpreted as a deification of the creature, and the exaltation of self-will might be construed as an expression of the will of God; how all distinction between good and evil, virtue and vice, might be swept away, and all external conduct become a matter of indifference. Nay, let these utterances be hardened into intellectual dogma, and they are the most dangerous of falsehoods. If God is thus unqualifiedly in all created things, and all things are filled with Him, then my will, whatever it be, is but the putting

<sup>1</sup> Vaughan's *Hours with the Mystics*, book vi., ch. 6.

forth of His will, and my act is the act of God Himself. But the loftier the truth, the baser the parody of which it is susceptible. The devil, says St. Augustine, is but the ape of God.

The little that we know about Tauler's personal history after he returned to Strasburg and began to exercise his vocation as a preaching friar may be gathered about three events, and, meagre as it is, will be quite sufficient to show us what manner of man he was. These events are, —

1. His defiance of the papal ban.
2. His conversion.
3. The advent of the plague usually known as the Black Death.

1. "According to mediæval notions, Christendom was one, — one church and one political state. The whole ecclesiastical power centred in the Pope, who was the world-priest. And the whole civil power centred in the Emperor, who was the world-king."<sup>1</sup> The Pope was chosen by the college of cardinals. The Emperor was similarly chosen by a number of prince-called Electors, though, after his choice by electors, the Emperor had to be approved and acknowledged by the Pope. Sometimes there was a contested election in either case, — two popes claiming the papal tiara, two emperors claiming the imperial crown. In the year 1314 this state of things occurred in the empire; Frederick of Austria and Louis of Bavaria both claimed the election, and both were crowned, and for eight weary years there was a contest between them for the undivided power. The people were divided in their sentiments. The Pope could recognize but one of the claimants, and Frederick was his favorite. The

<sup>1</sup> Dr. T. M. Lindsay, *Reformation*, p. 178.

burghers of Strasburg declared for Louis, and thought that the Pope had no right to interfere in civil affairs. He had his own throne at Rome ; let him attend to his business and rule the church. And so the Pope said, "Strasburg shall be put under the ban, and all cities, towns, and individuals who acknowledge Louis for their emperor." We must not forget what this meant. It closed the doors of all the churches. It forbade the preaching of the gospel to those who were under the interdict, though if the Pope were right and the people wrong, one would think that they needed preaching all the more. It refused the sacraments to Christian people ; it compelled the wicked and lawless to go unadmonished. It reduced society, as far as possible, to the condition of paganism. The sick could receive no comfort, and the dying no assurance of absolution. And poor as the aid and comfort of the church were in those days to the weary and the heavy-laden, they were yet far better than none. The priests and the monks took their departure to other towns and provinces which sided with the Pope, in order to avoid excommunication. In a word, the multitudes of the poor and the ignorant were made to suffer for the offenses of their superiors ; and if the ban were deserved at all, it was made to press the heaviest where it was least deserved and most feared.<sup>1</sup> Through

<sup>1</sup> "That awful doom which canons tell  
Shuts paradise and opens hell ;  
Anathema of power so dread,  
It blends the living with the dead,  
Bids each good angel soar away,  
And every ill one claim his prey ;  
Expels thee from the church's care,  
And deafens Heaven against thy prayer ;  
Arms every hand against thy life,

all this long and fearful contest, in which the Pope's curse hung like a thunder-cloud over Alsatia, Tauler shrank not for a moment from his customary labors. The heavens were clear over *his* head. In the fear of God and the love of man all lower fear vanished away. The church door of *his* convent was not to be nailed up. Day after day he went about encouraging the fearful, consoling the sorrowing, telling men everywhere of the love of God, endeavoring in every way to vary and multiply his labors so as far as possible to fill the places deserted by his brethren. He was the good shepherd of his own flock and of all the shepherdless flocks that he could reach by his voice or his pen. God's gentleness made him great in that fearful time, — very great. If we knew nothing else about him than this, this alone would glorify him as a star of the first magnitude in that dark night of the Middle Ages. Strong and tender, brave and Christly man, John Tauler! There is no sainthood since apostolic days that can outrival thine! He addressed a letter to his brother-priests about this time, urging them to

Bans all who aid thee in the strife,  
 Nay, each whose succor cold and scant  
 With meanest alms relieves thy want;  
 Haunts thee while living, — and, when dead,  
 Dwells on thy yet devoted head;  
 Rends Honor's scutcheon from thy hearse,  
 Stills o'er thy bier the holy verse,  
 And spurns thy corpse from hallowed ground,  
 Flung like vile carrion to the hound; —  
 Such is the dire and desperate doom  
 For sacrilege decreed by Rome." — *Lord of the Isles*.

Sir Walter's picture, so far from being overdrawn, is tamer than the facts would warrant, through the exigencies of rhyme and metre. For a description less bizarre, but really more adequate, see Wordsworth's *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, part I., xxxvi.

comfort the people, and keep on preaching and administering the sacraments. "For," he says, "ye are bound to visit and console the sick, remembering the bitter pain and death of Christ, who hath made satisfaction, not for your sins only, but also for those of the whole world; who doth represent us all before God, so that if one falleth innocently under the ban, no pope can shut him out of heaven. Ye should, therefore, give absolution to such as wish therefor, giving heed rather to the bidding of Christ and his apostles than to the ban, which is issued only out of malice and avarice." "Those who hold the true Christian faith, and sin only against the person of the Pope, are no heretics. Those rather are real heretics who obstinately refuse to repent and forsake their sins: for let a man have been what he may, if he will so do, he cannot be cast out of the true church. Through Christ, the truly penitent thief, murderer, traitor, adulterer, all may have forgiveness. Such as God beholdeth under an unrighteous ban, He will turn for them the curse into a blessing." Luther himself uttered no braver words than these, two hundred years later, at Worms or Wittenberg.

2. His greatness appears in another way, though perhaps quite as significantly, in the crisis of his life, which is commonly called his conversion, which occurred in 1340, when Tauler was fifty years of age. His humility and childlikeness of spirit were as conspicuous in this as was his bravery in his treatment of the ban. He had been preaching now for many years, and his fame had gone far and wide. He was known and loved as a good and holy man. There appeared one day in his audience a stranger,<sup>1</sup> who heard the

<sup>1</sup> Nicholas of Basle.

sermon through, and then desired to make confession and receive absolution. This he did several times. At length the layman requested, to the doctor's surprise, that he would preach a sermon setting forth the highest spiritual attainment and how it may be reached. The sermon was preached, and it is still extant, setting forth, in four and twenty articles, the highest spiritual attainment. But the godly layman was not satisfied. He plainly told the preacher that, while preaching to others, he had not yet discovered the sinfulness of his own heart, that he had never yet made a complete surrender of his own will to God, and that he had come thirty leagues, not so much to hear him preach as to warn him against deceiving himself. A flush of indignation for a moment spread itself over the doctor's face, that a layman should dare to address him thus; but instantly he recognized it as the faithful wound of a friend, and took the reproof with the utmost humility and sweetness of spirit. The word, like a flash of lightning, had illumined the depths of his nature, had detected in him a lurking pride and self-sufficiency of which he had been all unaware, and, deeply humbled and mortified, he embraced the layman, saying, "Thou hast been the first to tell me of my fault. Oh, stay with me, and show me how I may overcome it. Thou shalt be my spiritual father, and I will be thy poor, sinful son." Now this was not morbidness, but downright honesty. It was the fifty-first Psalm, translated into the German of the Middle Ages. It was the cry of the self-recognized and self-condemned publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner." So humbled in this new degree of self-knowledge did the poor friar become, that for two years his lips were sealed in shame. He

did not dare to preach. The agony of his spirit wasted his body and reduced his physical strength as if a disease were upon him. He was taunted by his enemies for his silence, and even his friends suspected and forsook him. His fellow-monks ridiculed him for being stricken with a sorrow that they could not understand. Even the mercy of God, which he had preached so freely to others, he felt too wicked and too unworthy to claim for himself. But out of this furnace he was to come forth as gold that has been tried in the fire. The night of weeping was to be followed by a morning of joy. As he lay one day upon his couch there came into his thought the recollection of the sufferings and love of his Lord, and of his own ungratefulness, and there welled up out of his heart and overflowed from his lips these words, "O merciful God, have mercy upon me a poor sinner; have mercy in thine infinite compassion, for I am not worthy to live upon the face of the earth!" And as a mother hears the cry and runs to the succor of her child, God came to him with abundant comfort. Emptied of himself, he was filled with the peace that passeth understanding, and with the peace came power. "Now," said his faithful friend, "thou knowest the power of God's grace. Now thou wilt understand the Scripture as never before, and be able to show thy fellow-Christians the way to eternal life. Now one of thy sermons will bring more fruit than a hundred aforetime, coming, as it will, from a simple, loving, humbled heart; and much as the people have set thee at naught, they will now far more love and prize thee. But a man with great treasure must guard against thieves. See to it that thou hold fast thy humility, by which thou wilt best keep thy riches.



Now thou needest my teaching no longer, having found the right Master, whose instrument I am, and who sent me hither. Now in all godly love thou shalt teach me in turn." And it all came true. From this time forth he was known and loved, and honored and revered, for his life of active love and pity, of patience and meekness, — a life in imitation of Christ. From this time they called him "Doctor Illuminatus," the Doctor upon whom a great light hath shined.<sup>1</sup>

3. A few years after this occurred the third event which served to disclose the greatness and real Christliness of the man. In 1348 the Black Death appeared in Strasburg. It was a plague, says Petrarch, that desolated the world. For fifteen years previous it had been ravaging the Orient. It had been accompanied, or rather preceded, by terrible convulsions of nature and by a great variety of calamities, which, in those days, and even down to our own time, were regarded rather as the capricious visitations of a wrathful God than as the inevitable and legitimate results of natural causes. There had been droughts, famines, floods, swarms of locusts, and earthquakes which had changed in an hour the contour of vast areas of the earth's surface. The order of the seasons even seemed to have lost its stability, — heavy snows falling in summer and fierce lightnings in winter, ex-

<sup>1</sup> John Tauler's Covenant, A. D. 1340 : "Dear Lord and Bridegroom, I here vow and promise to Thee surely, that all which Thou wilt I also will. Come sickness, come health, come pleasure or pain, sweet or bitter, cold or heat, wet or dry, whatever Thou wilt that do I also will ; and desire altogether to come out from my own will, and to yield a whole and willing obedience unto Thee, and never to desire aught else, either in will or thought ; only let Thy will be accomplished in me in time and in eternity."

cessive cold in July and a corresponding degree of heat in December, and at last the plague. Vast masses of organic matter, the bodies of unburied animals and men, were strewn over the ground. The locusts that had devoured every green thing and exhausted all life became in turn the prey of death, and poisoned with their corruption the air which they had before darkened with their flight. Some chroniclers tell us that the fetid atmosphere became visible; so heavily was it laden with pestilence and death that its folds covered the earth and draped the hill-sides like a funeral pall. No country was exempt from the visitation, no classes were secure from attack, whole towns were made desolate. On the land every house was a pest-house, and on the sea the ships were floating morgues, often with no helmsman to guide them, freighted with corpses, and spreading their contagion wherever wind and wave chanced to waft them. There were not enough of the living to care for the dead or to dig their graves, and the very rivers were consecrated as cemeteries, and floated along through town and field their crowded drift of death.<sup>1</sup>

The estimated mortality is appalling to think of after half a thousand years have passed. It is as if the habitable world had been swept by a flood of death. In the Orient forty millions perished. In Europe twenty-five millions. The city of London alone lost one hundred thousand. Italy lost one half of all its population; Southern France two thirds. In many parts of France it was computed that only one out of ten was left alive. In Tauler's own little city of Strasburg sixteen thousand persons fell victims to

<sup>1</sup> See Vaughan, vol. i., book vi., ch. 7. Also, Hecker's *Epidemics of the Middle Ages*.

it. And the plague did more than destroy life. It dissolved the very bonds of society. Natural affection seemed to die even in the hearts of fathers and mothers, husbands and wives. Fear of danger slew its tens of thousands, and where it did not slay it made men hard and women cruel. Trade and commerce came to a stand-still. The merchant dreaded to touch the money of his customer, the buyer equally feared the merchandise of the seller. Death was lurking everywhere and in everything. "Every man dreaded not merely the touch and the breath of his neighbor, but his very eye, so subtle and so swift seemed the infection." Superstition aggravated the horror. Men, thinking to appease the wrath of God by penance, formed themselves into wandering bands, with rules for self-torture. In ghastly processions, half-naked, and chanting wild and doleful airs, they traversed the continent of Europe, scourging and lacerating themselves, entreating others to join in their fanatical will-worship, and only spreading more widely the very contagion which they deprecated by their scourgings and ululations. Then, too, an ignorant and unreasoning race-hate played its part. Here and there where Jews were assembled they were accused of creating the pestilence by poisoning the wells, and thousands of them were burned in their homes, twelve thousand in the city of Mayence alone. "At Strasburg a monster scaffold was erected in the Jewish burial-ground, and two thousand were burnt alive in a single holocaust. At Basle all the Jews were burnt together in a wooden edifice erected for the purpose. At Spires they set their quarter in flames and perished by their own hands." On every hand there was terror or cruelty, recklessness or despair.

John Tauler had got far beyond any fear of the pestilence that walketh in darkness or the destruction that wasteth at noon-day. He had compassed the endeavor of the true mystic, and was "walking with God." He dwelt in the secret place of the Most High, and abode under the shadow of the Almighty. With two brother-monks of like mind, by day and by night he went about among the dead and dying, preparing these for burial, and inspiring, comforting, cheering with the promises of the gospel, those who were entering the valley of death. He was mother, nurse, and minister in one. Works of love are better, said he, than lofty contemplation, and to carry broth to a sick brother more pleasing to God than to be rapt away at such a time in devoutest prayer.

"Love took up the harp of life and smote on all the chords with might,—

Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, passed in music out of sight."

Meantime the renewal of the Pope's ban had increased the terrors of the ignorant, and added to the general distress. But this was no time to question whether the Pope was to be obeyed. Obeying him in such a case would surely be disloyalty to God. Ban or no ban these brothers should not die unshrived, nor go out into the dark unlighted by the candle of his faith or the comfort of the sacrament. His word was as good as the Pope's. "Son, daughter, thy sins are forgiven thee for the dear Lord's sake. If thou truly repentest die in peace." Tauler had learned the great lesson that man's highest good is to find the living God and to come to Him; and that this is for every man, and that every man must find Him and come to Him for himself; and that neither priest nor pope

can stand between the two. He knew that the church might ban or bless whom she would; the ban or the blessing were equally of no account in such high affairs as these. There was the voice of God himself made articulate by the lips of the man Christ Jesus, and sounding forevermore, through the sin and sorrow and sickness and death of this world for every soul that would heed it, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me to be meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls." That yoke he had taken, that rest he had found, and these dying brothers of his should know it, and should know the way to it; and if the ban burnt him, or the plague slew him in making it known, what mattered it? he was with God, and God was with him here or there.

The Dark Ages were passing away. That time could not be wholly dark that could give to the world one such character as this. Through that long historic night there gleams many a star of chivalry, there burns many a meteor of knightly valor, there sounds many a chanson of heroism; but what feats of knight-errantry, what devotion of crusader, what enthusiasm of battle for the rescue of captive knighthood or the recovery of conquered shrine, is worthy for a moment to compare with this? Without question there were multitudes numbered among the mystics of the fourteenth century who reflected no honor upon the name. There are always shams in plenty masquerading as true men and women; and some even of these are honest, being egregiously self-deceived. But hold them up by Tauler and the difference is painfully clear. Throw the leaden coin down along with the silver, and what you

thought was a ring is only a pitiful thud. The sainthood of Tauler is the sainthood of all time. There is no other. Its one unchanging formula, yesterday and to-day and forever, is, "Whosoever he be among you that forsaketh not all that he hath and taketh not up his cross and followeth not after me, he cannot be my disciple." The gateway to the kingdom of heaven, now as then, is the spirit of a little child.



## II.

### WICLIF.

A. D. 1324-1384.

ONCE more the Church is seized with sudden fear,  
And at her call is Wiclif disinhumed:  
Yea, his dry bones to ashes are consumed  
And flung into the brook that travels near;  
Forthwith, that ancient Voice, which Streams can hear,  
Thus speaks (that Voice which walks upon the wind,  
Though seldom heard by busy human-kind) —  
“As thou these ashes, little Brook! wilt bear  
Into the Avon, Avon to the tide  
Of Severn, Severn to the narrow seas,  
Into main Ocean they, this deed accurst  
An emblem yields to friends and enemies  
How the bold Teacher's Doctrine, sanctified  
By truth, shall spread, throughout the world dispersed.”  
WORDSWORTH'S *Eccl. Sonnets*, part II., xiii.





## II.

### WICLIF.

A. D. 1324-1384.

THERE is said to have been preserved in the city of Prague a missal, containing the ancient liturgy of the Hussites, one of whose rich illuminations represents Wiclif at the top of the page kindling a spark. Just below, Hus is portrayed blowing the spark into a flame. And finally, underneath Hus stands Luther, brandishing a lighted torch. It is a just portrayal of the relations in which the three men stood historically to each other. Whether the familiar designation by which Wiclif has been styled "the Morning-Star of the Reformation" was suggested by the picture, or whether the picture was inspired by a title that had been already given, I do not know. It is certainly true that Wiclif was the pioneer in the heroic work in which Hus gave up his life and Luther was put under the ban, and which has had as its modern outcome the freedom and greatness of the three greatest powers of the world in the nineteenth century, — free Germany, free England, and free America.

Protestants of every tongue have just united with Germany in celebrating the four hundredth anniversary of Luther's birth. But to all English-speaking peoples a more significant as well as a more venerable anniversary will come with the last day of the year

(1884) upon which we are about to enter.<sup>1</sup> On that day five centuries will have elapsed since John Wiclif died. It is too petty and invidious a question to ask, which of the two men is the more worthy of distinction? Each did his work, and did it well, — the work for which the Church and the world were ignorantly waiting. The two worked along similar lines, by similar methods, under the inspiration of the same thought, — the inalienable right of every human spirit to the liberty of the sons of God. They both attacked one system of spiritual tyranny, both asserted the same right of private judgment, both appealed to the same standards of authority and reason, both were Protestants before Protestantism existed as a system. And yet Englishmen — and we are English — cannot forget that our Wiclif dared to call the Pope Antichrist a century and a half before the Wittenberg monk burned the bull of that Pope's successor; that a Bible in their own language went forth to the common people of England from the Lutterworth parsonage, preceding by the same space of one hundred and fifty years the German Bible that was set free from the towers of the Wartburg. We cannot forget that the Oxford scholar knew little Greek and less Hebrew, and so had to translate from a translation, while the subsequent revival of Oriental learning enabled the German to draw from the original tongues in which the "holy men of old wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." We cannot forget that the work of the Englishman had to be painfully copied by hand and secretly distributed, and so was handicapped in its course, while that of the German found the printing-press waiting to give it a thousand wings. Whatever

<sup>1</sup> Spoken December 16, 1883.

judgment, therefore, might be pronounced by the world at large as to the relative merits of the two men, and the relative value of the parts they respectively bore in the great historic movement of the Reformation, we English-speakers, at least, must claim that for us Wiclif stands preëminent.

That was a great century in the first quarter of which Wiclif had his birth, and in the last quarter of which he died. It would have been marked in English annals had he not lived at all. Few reigns have been more splendid than that of Edward the Third, who came to the throne within a few years of Wiclif's birth, and held it for half a century. It was the century of Crécy and Poitiers, which gave to Englishmen for a time the mastery of France. Chivalry then produced its consummate flower in the person of the Black Prince, than whom, in his best days, knight was never more brave or gentle, more bold or gracious. It was during the fifty years of Edward's reign that architecture lent her assistance to religion in the completion of those glorious structures which for hundreds of years have made Lincoln and Wells and Peterborough and Salisbury and Westminster and Winchester the favorite resorts of poetry and devotion. It was then that the great William of Wykeham founded the first of the famous public schools of England. It was then that Chaucer sung the "Canterbury Pilgrimage" and the "Romaunt of the Rose." It was then that the nation finally cast off the trammels of a foreign tongue, and the English first asserted itself as a true national language; the laws began to be published and the proceedings of the courts to be conducted in the dialect of the people. Great progress was made in jurisprudence. Trial by jury dis-

placed the ruder methods of the ordeal and the combat, and more important new laws were passed in the time of Edward than in all the preceding reigns since the Conquest; none more important, perhaps, than the famous act designated, from its initial word, the statute of *præmunire*, which was introduced for the purpose of checking papal encroachments on the prerogatives of the crown, and which finally resulted in its being made a penal offense to endeavor to enforce the authority of papal bulls and provisions upon English soil. Learning, also, was eagerly pursued; thirty thousand students at one time, and from almost all ranks of society, thronged the halls and colleges of Oxford, and first gave it the dignity of a great University.

Besides all this, great changes took place in the structure of society; men were brought more nearly to one level than they had ever been before. The stringency of the old feudal system was relaxed, and finally passed away under the force of events which legislation would have been powerless to control. That terrible Black Death, which in the course of a few months swept away a full half of the population of England, had its beneficent results. It made labor scarce and created a rise in wages. It broke up that custom which had long had the force of law, by which tenants might not leave the estates of their old landlords. It sent them, by a law as inevitable as gravity, to the points where the best wages were to be had for their labor, and practically brought servitude to an end. The masses became free people working for their wages. Such was the reign of Edward III., which was wholly embraced in the life of Wiclif: magnificent in its conquests, splendid in its arts, revolutionary in its juris-

prudence, beneficent in its social aspects, inspiring to patriotism, propitious to learning. The whole movement of the age was towards freedom, liberality, enlargement. And yet we have not touched its highest glory, for we have said nothing of its religious aspect. All this was setting for the jewel; all this was the environment of Wiclif. It has been said that a great age makes a great man. The doctrine of environment is a favorite doctrine of to-day. But it is certain that a great man helps to make a great age. It is not possible at present, and perhaps it will not be possible for many years to come, if ever, to settle the questions, how much Wiclif owed to his environment, and how much his environment owed to him. For, strangely enough, the great mass of his works, unlike those of Luther, remain still in manuscript, in the Latin tongue, deposited among continental archives, and so accessible to but few among even critical students of history. We know he was great, but how great can as yet be told only approximately. Even his enemies acknowledged his intellectual preëminence in language which friendship could hardly have surpassed. I translate a few words quoted by Dr. Lechler from a popish chronicler: <sup>1</sup> "A doctor in theology the most eminent of his day; in philosophy, deemed second to none; in scholastic discipline, incomparable. He soared far above others in the subtlety of his genius, and surpassed them in the profundity of his knowledge."

It will be sufficient for my purpose at this time if we look briefly at Wiclif's work under the three aspects in which that work was successively developed; as a patriot, a religious reformer, and a man of letters.

<sup>1</sup> Knighton.

1. Wiclif is already from forty to forty-five years of age before he is seen to enter, at least with any prominence, into the affairs of his time. His life previous to 1365 is involved in much obscurity. Of his boyhood and early training and of his parentage almost nothing is known. Even the year of his birth is uncertain. That he was trained in the University of Oxford, and was faithful and devout and of an exceptionally bright mind, and of large attainments as a scholar as scholarship then was, is evident from the fact that he was made successively Fellow of one college, Master of a second, and Warden of a third. In this great silent period he must have been very assiduous in laying his foundations. The grand structure which the after-years beheld could have rested upon no dilettanteism or perfunctoriness. We may well believe that he was, what a recent investigator<sup>1</sup> has called him, "The foremost man of his university, the acknowledged representative of the greatness of Grosseteste and Ockham," and, as one of his most bitter contemporary opponents affirmed, "By the common sort of divines esteemed little less than a god."<sup>2</sup>

From his quiet, cloister-led student life, he suddenly steps forth into the arena of public affairs. And it surprises us, as we read the story, to see what a man of affairs he is, — intense, clear of vision, practical. It is not as the priest, or the scholar, or the religious reformer, but as the patriot that he comes to the front.

<sup>1</sup> Professor Burrows, *Wiclif's Place in History*, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> "Even in the present day he is reckoned by the learned among the four greatest schoolmen whom the fourteenth century possessed, and as sharing the palm with Duns Scotus, Occam, and Bradwardine." — Dr. Johann Loserth, *Wiclif and Hus*, p. xv.

He was always a reformer, to be sure, but his ideas passed through a gradation which was compelled and colored by the aspects of the time. They are political at first, during his middle life; afterwards the political aspect fades out, and more distinctly religious motives come to the front.<sup>1</sup> He is first of all concerned in the condition of the state, its welfare, its liberties, its honor; and we shall see how he was inevitably and by a sort of evolutionary process brought from this into the work of a religious reformer, and from that into his work under its final aspect as a Bible translator and man of letters. His first movement, then, was in this wise: —

In 1365, when Wiclif was from forty to forty-five years of age, Pope Urban V. made a demand upon Edward III. for the annual payment of one thousand marks as a feudal tribute. This tribute had been imposed one hundred and fifty years before by Pope Innocent III. upon King John and his successors, as the condition of their holding the crown, but had long fallen into irregularity, and of late years entirely into disuse. So that Urban not only demanded the annual payment of one thousand marks, but also arrearages for thirty-three years, a sum which would be equal now to about three hundred and fifty thousand dollars of our money. In the previous century it was ascertained that the papal see for several years had drawn out of England an annual revenue of sixty thousand marks, or six hundred thousand dollars of our money. Besides this it has been computed that at this very time more than half the landed property of the kingdom was in the hands of the Romish priesthood.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lechler, ii., p. 313.

<sup>2</sup> Le Bas' *Life of Wiclif*, p. 131 (London, 1832). "Of fifty-



And to this must also be added the fact that the Pope had, so far as possible, filled English benefices with foreigners, whose revenues, as estimated by Robert Grosseteste, the famous bishop of Lincoln, were no less than seventy thousand marks, — seven hundred thousand dollars, three times the clear revenue of the king. And when we consider, as Mr. Hallam says,<sup>1</sup> that the purchasing power of money at that time was twenty-four or twenty-five times as great as it is at present, we can conceive how the heart of a patriot would be stirred at this despotic and robber-like usurpation of the papacy upon the sovereign rights of the English crown, and this shameless financial spoliation of the country for the benefit of a foreign court. Such rapacity was no trifle. Its enormous and greedy exactions fell, where all taxes fall, upon industry. They withdrew the capital which supported labor. They persistently bled the rank and file of the people whom Wiclif loved, and in whose true welfare, both temporal and spiritual, his heart and soul were bound up. This, then, first of all, he felt to be God's call to him, John Wiclif. Into this church and state question he now threw himself with all the weight of his learning and logic and devotion to truth and justice. How much he personally had to do with its final decision perhaps can never be known, but it was decided finally upon the grounds of principles which he had personally adduced and defended : —

When the demand was made by the Pope there was coupled with it an alternative as insolent as the de-

three thousand knightly holdings on the national register, twenty-eight thousand belonged to Mother Church ! ” — White's *Eighteen Christian Cent.*, p. 359, Eng. ed.

<sup>1</sup> Hallam, *Middle Ages*, chap. ix., part ii.

mand itself was extortionate. Edward was apprised that upon failure to comply he "would be cited by process to appear at the papal court to answer for the default to his civil and spiritual sovereign;" a threat one would think hardly to be brooked by the conqueror of Crécy and the acknowledged hero of his time. Without making any personal response, however, which might have lowered his dignity, the king laid the matter before his Parliament. Their answer was sharp and conclusive. It is spicy reading to-day. It must have rung down at the Pope's feet like the iron gauntlet of the indignant king; more than that, it was the mailed hand of incensed England. "Forasmuch as neither King John, nor any other king, could bring this realm and kingdom in such thralldom and subjection but by common consent of Parliament, the which was not done; therefore that which he did was against his oath at coronation. If, therefore, the Pope should attempt anything against the king by process, or other matters in deed, the king with all his subjects should, with all their force, resist the same."<sup>1</sup> Here was Protestantism with a vengeance; the thing itself full-grown, before the name of it had ever been heard of. A large spark it was that Wiclif had kindled. Neither Hus nor Luther could make it much brighter or fiercer than that. It was in fact a national renunciation of vassalage, a declaration of independence as significant and as fruitful as one that was to be made four hundred years later by sons of these same men not yet born, in a city not yet built, in a world not yet known to exist.

I say this was Wiclif's *spark*. There is good reason for supposing that he was himself a member of this

<sup>1</sup> Le Bas' *Life of Wiclif*, chap. iii, p. 122.

Parliament. He has left on record a *résumé* of the speeches then made and a most lucid arrangement of the arguments by which the decision was supported. They are palpably the rescript of his own thought and utterance. They read like the "*Quorum pars fui.*" That he was personally identified with the parliamentary measure, and regarded as largely responsible for the result, is evidenced by the fact that he was challenged to defend the action, and promptly did so in a way that quenched his adversary. That his influence had been of no secondary value in bringing about this result is still further attested by the fact that the king now began to look to him for further and more honorable service of a political nature. Among the Romish abuses there was one that had long been heavy and was now growing heavier, namely, the occupation of benefices by foreigners. When a vacancy occurred in any clerical or collegiate office, it had long been the custom on the part of the Pope to appoint some favorite from the continent as the incumbent, until a very large proportion of such places were now held by aliens. It was well enough in the ruder centuries when England could not raise her own scholars, but as the condition of things had now changed and was still brightening, it began to be felt as an injustice and a humiliation. It was an intolerable insult to that national spirit which was now asserting itself. And so in 1374 the king appointed a commission, of which Wiclif was a prominent member, to meet at Bruges and confer with the papal authorities about the abrogation of the abuse in question. They had full power "to conclude such a treaty as should at once secure the honor of the Church and uphold the rights of the English crown and realm." It was high honor for

Wiclif that he should thus have been matched by his sovereign with a plenipotentiary of the Pope. It indicated that he had earned the highest confidence of the monarch for his sagacity and for his interest in the true welfare of his king and country. It made, no doubt, an era in his life. It certainly was the pivot upon which he swung from the position of a political to that of a more distinctly religious reformer. His visit to Bruges was in some respects parallel, it has been suggested,<sup>1</sup> to Luther's famous visit to Rome, nearly a century and a half later, which opened his eyes to unsuspected enormities and changed the current of his thought and feeling. The city of Bruges had at that time just passed into the hands of the dukes of Burgundy, and had reached the very summit of prosperity. It was the commercial centre of the world. The magnificence of its court surpassed that of any European monarch. The enormous prosperity of its woolen trade gave rise to the chivalric order of the Golden Fleece. The argosies of Venice and Genoa brought to it the wealth of the East, and ships of every land discharged their cargoes upon its quays. Its public buildings were magnificent. In this very century of Wiclif's visit was erected that famous belfry which our Longfellow immortalized, and whose chimes the reformer may have been among the very first to hear. A score of foreign courts had their ambassadors here. The toilet and costume of the women were so superb that when the queen of Philip the Fair of France visited the city she was piqued at being as but one queen among a hundred. But even then, as the keen-eyed Englishman may have seen, the goodly city was hastening to its decadence. There was already

<sup>1</sup> By Lechler, i., p. 229.

visible the moral disintegration, the spiritual degradation, which the papal power wrought everywhere; visible through the purple and golden drapery, the sure prelude of disaster and decay. For two years the commission was busied in negotiating with the papal plenipotentiaries, but with little or no success. England was worsted in the treaty, but through no fault of Wiclif, we may be sure. The king had formed his commission on the plan of a gridiron-pendulum, in which the contraction of one metal counteracts the expansion of the other. He had joined with Wiclif a bishop and other ecclesiastics who were favorable to the cause of the Pope, and so the crying wrongs remained practically unredressed. But Wiclif came home to England with no less determination to keep up the warfare to which he had committed himself. He had had new experience of the chicanery and treachery of Rome. He had come face to face with her diplomatists and had penetrated their disguises. He had owned in some sort hitherto the supremacy of the papal church; henceforth he used no measured terms in declaring her iniquity and perfidy.

That he had been faithful to the interests of his sovereign we may judge from the fact that upon his return the king made him rector of Lutterworth, — the village which is forever associated henceforth with his name; where he taught and preached and translated the Bible, and peacefully died.

I can notice but one more event in looking at this political aspect of his life. His constant labors in behalf of the independence of the crown and the freedom of the people from foreign exactions drew upon him a fierce eruption of ecclesiastical wrath. In 1377 he was cited before a convocation in St. Paul's to

answer to the charge of publishing various erroneous doctrines. There were hot-heads present among his friends, notably John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, as well as among his enemies. The tribunal was broken up by a personal squabble between them without Wiclif's utterance of a single word. But the affair was not to end thus. A list of charges was drawn up and sent to the Pope, who forthwith issued no less than five bulls, three of them addressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London, the fourth to the King, and the fifth to the University of Oxford, directing them to inquire into the opinions alleged to be held by Wiclif, and if he should be convicted to imprison him until further orders. The Pope demanded thus only a preliminary inquiry, reserving for himself the process for heresy proper. Wiclif now seemed to be on a fair way to the stake. But man proposes, and the Pope was only man. Before the matter could be brought to an issue Gregory XI. died, and there arose the famous schism, in which two popes were recognized, — Urban VI. by England, Clement VII. by France, — and each had enough to do to watch and anathematize and excommunicate and foil and hate the other, without troubling himself with the Heretic of Lutterworth.

2. As a religious reformer Wiclif first comes before us only towards the close of his life. In 1381, only three years before his death, he enters upon a conflict with the mendicant monks. There were wandering up and down the land swarms of religious beggars, — tramps they would be called now, — claiming to be living the Christly life in a self-imposed poverty, and yet levying a most burdensome tax upon the patient and long-suffering charity of the people.

Of course they were priests, and they took every advantage of the superstitious reverence with which, among the common people, the clerical office was regarded. They preached and taught in every parish, with all the authority of the rector himself. They listened to confession, and gave absolution wherever there was a hand outstretched with money. If a crime had been secretly committed it could be confessed to these monks, who came from nowhere and went nowhere, absolution granted, conscience appeased, and no restraining influence left upon the criminal, where it was most needed, in the knowledge of any one in the immediate locality of the offense. "Let us follow our own pleasure," said men disposed to evil. "Some one of the preaching brothers will soon travel this way, — one whom we never saw before, and never shall see again, — so that when we have had our will we can confess without trouble or annoyance." <sup>1</sup> The consequence of all this was, that being no longer compelled to blush in the presence of their local ministers, they broke out into unbridled licentiousness. These vagrant clerics intruded themselves into every home, and oftentimes transgressed the home's dearest sanctities, and made light of its most sacred relationships. They traded, as Chaucer tells us, in pigs' bones, and innumerable other equally holy and equally useless relics. They were a swarm of gypsies, protected in their petty knaveries by a clerical garb, and shielded by the authentication of the Church. The mendicant orders had been originally instituted a hundred years before, when monastic institutions had expanded into castles of luxury, for the laudable object of exhibiting to the world an illustration of primitive Christian

<sup>1</sup> Le Bas, ch. iii. p. 109.

simplicity and self-denial. They had then been honorable, as doubtless they were in the main sincere and devout. But they deteriorated as soon as they began to be honored. As various privileges were bestowed upon them their numbers naturally multiplied. It was pleasant to be regarded with favor by pope and by people and yet lead the easy life of dependence, taking a living from the charity which deemed it an honor to have its gifts received. The orders, of course, increased with great rapidity. They became arrogant, as beggars will when giving has become the rule. Moreover, these barefoot friars, do-nothings, who professed that to them ownership of property was an accursed thing, by some hocus-pocus managed to get wealth and yet feel no qualms. The institution had grown into the proportions of a gigantic fraud. They became utterly shameless in belying the fundamental principles of their orders. "It is matter of melancholy presage," says a chronicler of the time, "that these friars have piled up their mansions to a royal altitude. They exhibit inestimable treasures within their spacious edifices. They beset the dying bed of the noble and the wealthy, in order to extort secret bequests from the fears of guilt or superstition. As the agents of papal extortion, they are incessantly applying the arts of flattery, the stings of rebuke, or the terrors of confession." Such were the poor brethren, — the holy mendicants.

Their preaching was as villainous as their practice; a medley of ancient legends and fabulous tales and grotesque riddles, interspersed with vilification of the regular priesthood and praises of mendicancy.

Such a shameful abuse could not exist in the same kingdom with Wiclif and he remain silent. His pen



and his tongue were unsparing and unwearied. He lashes, mocks, ridicules, lampoons them unmercifully. His words sting and cut. He lays bare their hypocrisy and pretense. He shows the people their extortion, and the worthlessness of their relics and their pardons. They are, he says, the tail of the Apocalyptic dragon. He writes a book against them in fifty chapters, every chapter a fusillade of truth set on fire with indignation.

But it was not in Wiclif's nature to tear down without building up. He drives out the bad, not to leave a vacuum, but to put the good in its place. Never was more faithful, more simple and practical preacher than he. The Word of God is the one substance he declares of true preaching: "The sower soweth the Word." Out of false preaching comes the spiritual deadness of the people. These friars are preaching falsehoods and living a falsehood, and out of falsehood nothing but falsehood can come. Indeed, there could be given in our theological schools of the present day no better rules for ministerial training than the thoughts of this old master of five hundred years ago upon what to preach and how to preach it. "It is God's Word that should be preached, for God's Word is the bread of souls, the indispensable, wholesome bread; and therefore to feed the flock in a spiritual sense without Bible-truth is the same thing as if one were to prepare for another a bodily meal without bread. God's Word is the life-seed which begets regeneration and spiritual life. Now the chief business of a preacher is to beget and to nourish up members of the Church. Therefore it is God's Word he must preach; then only will he succeed in his aims." And the how he says must be suitable to the what.

The soul and the life of the preacher must be in tune with the words, or the words can have no power.

All of which Wiclif illustrated in his own preaching and life. As we read these words we may well believe the tradition that it was this very man that Chaucer had in mind when he wrote of the good parson, —

“a clerk  
That Christ’s pure gospel would sincerely preach  
And his parishioners devoutly teach.  
.  
.  
.  
This noble ensample to his flock he gave,  
That first he wrought and afterward he taught  
The word of life he from the gospel caught.”

Thoroughly convinced of the power of simple truth rightly taught and devoutly lived, Wiclif conceived the idea of sending forth through the land a company of honest and godly men, who without special ecclesiastical training should tell the gospel story to the people. Thus originated the poor priests. It was not unlike the scheme of Wesley almost within present memory. “These men went forth in long garments of coarse red woolen cloth, barefoot and staff in hand in order to represent themselves as pilgrims and their wayfaring as a kind of pilgrimage, their coarse woolen dress being a symbol of their poverty and toil. Thus they wandered from village to village, through the kingdom, without stop or rest, preaching, teaching, warning, wherever they could find willing hearers, sometimes in church or chapel, wherever any such stood open for prayer and quiet devotion; sometimes in the church-yard when they found the church itself closed; and sometimes in the public street or market-place.”<sup>1</sup> They had all gone forth from Wiclif’s

<sup>1</sup> Lechler, i, 310.

school; they were filled with Wiclif's spirit, and Wiclif's one aim was theirs: to give the people the pure Word of God.

Thus Wiclif fought the mendicants and they never recovered in England from that day to this.

It is undoubtedly true that Wiclif's work was mainly of a political and ethical kind, but he bore also decidedly important relations to Protestant theology, relations which will doubtless be more fully recognized when his writings are brought to light. The paramount authority of Scripture was certainly as fully and boldly asserted by him as it ever was in later times by Luther himself. Perhaps Milton in his "*Areopagitica*" did not claim too much for him when he said: "Had it not been the obstinate perverseness of our prelates against the divine and admirable spirit of Wiclif to suppress him as a schismatic and innovator, perhaps neither the Bohemian Hus and Jerom, no, nor the name of Luther or of Calvin, had been ever known: the glory of reforming all our neighbors had been completely ours."<sup>1</sup>

3. Of course his work as a reformer runs into and pervades his literary labors. In the forefront of these labors must stand that monumental endeavor to give the whole Bible to his countrymen in their own language; an endeavor which occupied the closing years of his life, and which binds that life up into unity as with a clasp of pure gold. How vast his other literary work was, I have already intimated. There are extant still scores of works written by him, filled with various learning, no man can say exactly how numerous, the majority of them as yet unprinted, and even

<sup>1</sup> *Areopagitica*. Milton's Prose Works, vol. ii., p. 91, Bohn's edition. See, also, Fisher's *Reformation*, p. 60.

untranslated. They remain as they left his pen or the pens of his disciples, for the most part in the Imperial Library of Vienna.<sup>1</sup> They played their unknown part in that great reformation, and we are enjoying their untraceable results to-day. We drink many a refreshing draught without knowing what mountain's summit caught it from the heavens or what stream forwarded it to our cup. But that this man opened the Bible first to our English fathers we know; and our Christian days and institutions, and our noble literature are all saturated with the imperishable results of his toil. We cannot put it into words, we cannot even measure it in our thought. The Bible that we read to-day does not look to our eyes like the page of Wiclif; the men of the fourteenth century would have as great difficulty in reading it as we have in deciphering their rude and grotesque utterance. But his work underlies and supports the precious superstructure through which we walk as by still waters, or in which we lie down as in green pastures, even as the rough granite underlies all nature's quiet beauty or impressive sublimity. The work of this man underlies the lisping utterance of the infant scholar who repeats "The Lord is my shepherd" in our own dear English speech, as that granite makes possible the nodding daisy or the flower of grass. And that work too is, as I said, in all our literature. It did more than anything else to

<sup>1</sup> Since the above was written, it has come to my notice that a society of English and German scholars has undertaken to edit the complete works of Wiclif, and give them to the world. Some portion of them has already appeared. It is greatly to the credit of Christian scholarship that it thus marks the completion of five centuries since the reformer's death, as greatly to its shame that it has delayed the work so long.

form and fix our English speech. Your newspaper to-morrow morning would not have been possible without it. It was the seed out of which our libraries have grown. It has made the common mind intelligent. It has made the peasant the peer of the priest. It was the quickening of that national thought which has blossomed and fruited in Bacon and Milton and Shakespeare, in Mrs. Browning and George Eliot, in Thackeray and Hawthorne. Better than all this, it was the liberation of Christian faith and hope. It unbound these twin sisters to go wherever there should be English homes, to brighten and bless them; wherever there should be English toil, to dignify it; wherever there should be English graves, to tell of the Resurrection and the Life. In one final word, Wiclif's translation of the Bible was, for the English-speaking race around the world, the second Resurrection. The day of its completion was the Easter day of the English language.

The reformer died in peace, December 31, 1384. Long years after, impotent malice dug up his bones and burnt them, a confession at once both of malice and of impotence. The Word of the Lord endureth forever.

### III.

#### JOHN HUS.

A. D. 1373-1416.

IN the lonely struggle of duty, the inevitable loss of human aid must be replaced by our affinity with God. He that invented human virtue, and breathed into us our private veneration for its greatness; He that loves the martyr-spirit, scorning suffering for the sake of truth; He that beholds in every faithful mind the reflection of Himself; He that hath built an everlasting world, at once the shelter of victorious goodness and the theatre of its yet nobler triumphs, enwraps us in His immensity, and sustains us by His love. — JAMES MARTINEAU, *The Strength of the Lonely*.



### III.

JOHN HUS.

A. D. 1373-1416.

As we look upon a historical map, representing the Europe of the Middle Ages, no obvious relation is suggested as existing between the island of Great Britain and a little state in the heart of continental Europe, called Bohemia. There seems to be but one point of resemblance even, and that somewhat fanciful: Britain is *insulated* by water, and Bohemia is *isolated* by a surrounding wall of mountains. The latter country, indeed, is not unlike a vast natural fortification, lying four-square, with its angles closely coinciding with the cardinal points of the compass. This great square mountain embankment, perfectly unbroken save a little opening or gateway in the southeast into Moravia, incloses an area of nearly twenty thousand square miles; so that if you were to take a map of New England and look at it diagonally, the two States of New Hampshire and Vermont, taken together, would resemble Bohemia in shape, and would not materially differ from it in superficial measurement. But this fanciful point of resemblance which I have noticed between the *isolation* of Bohemia and the *insulation* of Great Britain is not so fanciful as to have been unproductive of other and very real resemblances which the map does not suggest. As far



back as the times of which we are to treat, and beyond, this seclusion had favored the development of a strong and vigorous national spirit, not inferior to that which sprang up in England during the three or four centuries after the Norman Conquest. Indeed, similar developments were taking place at the same time in the two countries. In both, the national language was beginning to assert itself in literature, in religion, and in law. In both, the patriotic spirit, jealous of foreign influence and confident in its own resources, was creating a literature of its own, and was demanding that, instead of Latin and German and Norman, the English and the Bohemian should be the language of the churches and the courts. The Bible had been translated into Bohemian two or three years before Wiclif gave it to his countrymen in English. And in both countries, as we shall see, the liberation of the Scriptures produced the same results. And with all this, the mountains round about Bohemia and the waters round about England had very much to do. Both were "accessible enough to all that was good, useful, and improving;" and yet both were "so far secluded by nature as to encourage the patriotic purpose of maintaining and cherishing their own proper character, customs, and institutions."<sup>1</sup>

But besides these resemblances, fanciful and real, between the two countries, and their progress in national development, there was a real connection between them so close, that the events of the fifteenth century in Bohemia must be regarded as the direct results of the fourteenth century in England. John Wiclif was spiritually the progenitor of John Hus; and the Hussite movement in Central Europe, six hun-

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Gillett.

dred miles away from England as the bird flies, was as certainly impelled by the Wicliffian movement in Oxford, as the little chronometer in a jeweler's window on Washington Street is driven by an electric impulse from the observatory clock in Cambridge. And what was the inconspicuous wire through which this far-off influence was exerted ?

In 1382, two years before the death of Wiclif, King Richard II. of England had married Anne of Bohemia, daughter of the Emperor Charles IV. Thus was established a close relationship between the two kingdoms. For twelve years Anne lived in England, and during that time imbibed the sentiments of Wiclif, and fostered the reforms which he inaugurated. The ladies of her court, largely drawn, of course, from her own people, shared her religious sympathies ; and when she died in 1394, ten years after Wiclif's death, they returned to Bohemia, carrying not only their sentiments, but many copies of his books. The writings of the English reformer were thus introduced into Bohemia under the best auspices, which accounts for the fact, noticed in the last lecture, that great numbers of Wiclif's works are still preserved in manuscript in the Imperial Library at Vienna.

There was another channel through which the English reformer's influence was powerfully exerted upon the distant little kingdom. In 1348 Anne's father, Charles IV., had founded the University of Prague, which became almost immediately, under the imperial favor, in wealth and numbers and influence, the foremost university of continental Europe, with the single exception of that of Paris. Between the universities of that day there was constant and rapid communication. A common language, the Latin, was in

use in all the lecture-rooms. In it all scholarly intercourse was conducted. The students moved freely from one university to another, and the professors could be equally well understood by all, whatever their nationality. A student needed to learn no new language in going from the lectures of Wiclif at Oxford, to those of Gerson at Paris, or to those of Hübner at Prague. This free student movement thus did for its time what the printing-press came to accomplish more rapidly and more thoroughly a century later. Thus, even before Anne's death, Wiclif's writings made as much noise and came to be almost as well known in Bohemia as in England.

And one other preliminary fact needs to be noted. In her endurance of the evils which Wiclif combated, England was not an exceptional sufferer. The same curse of mendicancy prevailed throughout Christendom. Continental as well as insular Europe was burdened with papal exactions. The Church everywhere was distracted by the claims of rival popes, and disgraced by the perfunctoriness and avarice of its priesthood. The satires of Chaucer and the complaint of *Piers Plowman* might as well have been written in French or German as in English, and they would have met with as true and hearty an echo from the popular feeling. In various ways the thoughts and discussions of teachers and students percolated downwards through the minds of the people at large, just as they do now. The popular mind is quick at receiving hints and suggestions; and exaggerated as individual ideas may be, the average opinion soon settles to something like the level of the truth. An illustration is recorded in one of the Hussite chronicles. Two English students from Oxford make their

way to Bohemia to attend lectures at the University of Prague. They are hot from the teachings of Wiclif, or some of his disciples. Stopping at an inn in the outskirts of the city, they persuade the host to permit them to paint a picture upon his walls. On this side one of them delineates a representation of the Saviour in his humble entrance into Jerusalem, seated upon an ass, poor people casting their garments in the way, little children scattering leaves and branches before him, and his disciples in humble guise and bare-foot following behind. On that side of the room the other student draws the picture of a papal procession; the head of the church mounted on a magnificent charger and wearing the triple crown, his raiment and the trappings of his horse studded with jewels, soldiers going before to clear the way, and following on, a company of scarlet cardinals only less gorgeous than their master. It was a sermon in the universal language which every guest of the inn could read, and the significance of which the wayfaring man, though a fool, could hardly misapprehend. This was the hint, doubtless, which, more than a hundred years afterward, Luther and his artist-friend Cranach expanded into that series of pictures which they called the Antithesis, and which wrought in a similar way for the progress of the Reformation among the people of Germany.

It is supposed that John Hus derived his name from a village in Southern Bohemia, Husinec, where he was born, July 6, 1373. His early days were passed under the tuition of the monks in the monastery of his native village; and when they could carry his education no farther he entered the high school of a neighboring town, where he completed his preparatory

studies. Meantime his father had died, leaving little to the mother but the boy with his bright mind and eager hopes. His love of learning was insatiable, and when he returned home from the high school, and the widowed mother propounded to him the question, "What shall we do now, my son?" his answer was ready. "I am going to Prague, mother: God will take care of us." The mother's piety had inspired that of her son, and she was now nothing behind him in her faith. She had nothing to give him but her blessing and her prayers; he must make his way alone by the help of God. Full of maternal solicitude, however, for the boy, who had never been farther away from home than the neighboring village, and who was now about to enter upon scenes so strange and full perchance of unknown peril, the good woman determined to go with her boy to the capital, and personally commend him to the care of the rector of the university. We are told that when Hannah, the mother of the Prophet Samuel, took her boy up to present him in the house of the Lord in Shiloh, she took with her a gift of three bullocks, an ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine. The poor Bohemian mother could take no such munificent offering. But out of her poverty she took as an offering to the rector a cake and a goose. I do not suppose she intended any pun upon the name Hus, which means goose, but it probably was all she had to give. On the way the goose escaped and could not be recaptured, which filled the poor woman's mind with a double grief: first, that now she had only her one poor cake to offer to the rector, and then, that, being not entirely free from the superstition of her age, the loss of the goose seemed to her an ill-omen of the fortunes of her son.

But her religion was of that simple and very exalted sort which knows a ready refuge from all fears, and so, falling upon her knees then and there, she commended the boy to the Father of the fatherless, and the two journeyed on.

I do not think that the retrospects of history furnish us with many such scenes as that : the poor, but gentle and loving mother clinging so fondly to her boy that she could not let him set off alone to the great university town, but must walk with him all the way. I imagine them walking together, a quaint couple in their peasant guise, beguiling the weary distance by their chat of days gone and days to come, of memories and hopes, stopping now and then to offer their devotions at some wayside shrine, glad when night came to find the shelter of some rude inn, or, if that was not to be had, too poor to have any fears, lying out under the roof of the great Father's house. How differently men must have read their future from the way that angels were reading it !

Antecedently, we would not expect any very noticeable results to follow from taking up a country lad, sixteen years of age, and dropping him down into a great and splendid university where were gathered thousands of students from every nation of Europe.<sup>1</sup> Very much like letting fall one drop more into the ever changing river. But this drop was charged with a power and a personality which would not admit of its being swallowed up. Its influence penetrated and spread, and yet kept itself distinct. John

<sup>1</sup> Authorities differ widely as to the number of students in Prague at this time, some putting it as high as forty thousand and upwards, others as low as five thousand, or even less. See an article by Henry Rogers, in *Good Words*, January, 1866.

Hus was more even to the university than the university could be to John Hus. The diamond is more than the setting. We cannot follow him through his university career from one degree to another. It was a brightening way over which he passed, until in his twenty-eighth year he was made dean of the theological faculty, and one year later became rector of the university, filling now the very place of that reverend man to whom the mother had brought her boy thirteen years before with her simple offering of a cake. One single incident of these student days reveals the stuff that was in him. Truth seemed to him the one precious thing, for which everything else might be profitably hazarded, — the pearl of great price. One day, having read the story of St. Lawrence, who was roasted to death on a gridiron, he asks himself the question, "Does the truth mean as much to me as that? Would I be willing to pay the price?" A companion doubts his devotion, and into the fire goes his hand up to the wrist, only to be saved by the forcible interference of his friend, who doubts his constancy no longer.

It was in his pulpit that Hus's work was mainly done and his influence chiefly exerted. His name is associated with the Bethlehem Chapel more intimately than Wiclif's is with the church at Lutterworth. "Its pulpit," said one of his Jesuitical enemies, speaking of the Bethlehem Chapel, "Its pulpit is John Hus's triumphal chariot, and the paintings upon the walls are the blazonry of his armor." The force which he personally added to the great Reformation movement was not of a theological so much as of a moral and spiritual kind. It was principally by the preaching of righteousness rather than by any attacks upon an

erroneous system of belief, or any attempts at changing the formal confession of the Church. It was the life of men around him that he sought to purify and elevate, and so to modify the life of the Church within, rather than to change its formularies. He was always combating sin rather than heresy; and men who persistently do that, will always run the risk of being accused of heresy, and, if the age will allow, of being burned for it by those who set orthodoxy of thought above correctness of life. Theologically, Hus was never the heretic that Wiclif was; he was at first apparently indifferent to the sentence pronounced upon Wiclif's books by the council of the university. Indeed, in one case at least, he unhesitatingly pronounced a writing of the Englishman heretical, and advised his friend Jerome to burn it or throw it into the Moldau. But he felt along with the English reformer, in relation to the evils of the times, the corruptions of the church, the absurd pretensions of the popes, the dishonesty of ecclesiasticism, and the moral and spiritual indifference of men around him. It was for fighting these things that he gave up his life at last. And the fight was chiefly conducted in the pulpit of Bethlehem Chapel. And what was Bethlehem Chapel?

A few years previously two wealthy citizens of Prague, inspired, perhaps, by the fact that the Bible had just been translated into the national tongue, desired that there might be some place where the Word of God might be preached independently of the cumbrous order of the church service, — not a place for masses and for music, but simply a sacred auditorium, where the people could come together to be instructed in religious truth. And so they built this

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large and beautiful house, and called it by the significant name *Bethlehem*, — *the house of bread*. And a house of bread it truly was from the time that Hus was inducted into its pulpit in the year 1402, when he was twenty-nine years of age, until, ten years later, he went forth a wanderer under the ban.

Hus was now filling a position, or rather several positions, of peculiar power and influence. He was rector of the university, and thus capable of reaching an intelligent and thinking multitude large enough in itself to constitute the population of a very respectable city, — a population, too, which had its vital connection with all thinking Europe. Through these students he was touching the remoter parts of the continent. At the same time he was confessor to Queen Sophia of Bavaria, second wife to King Wenzel of Bohemia, a woman of strong mind and high character, who was both wise and good enough to appreciate the wisdom and goodness of her chaplain. He was thus brought into familiar relations with many people of great influence among the Bohemian and Bavarian nobility. And finally, he was appealing, as no other man in all Bohemia did or could, to the awakened national spirit, to the growing patriotism of the people, by his continual and eloquent discourses in their own language in the Bethlehem pulpit, where he ruled the thought of the masses like a king upon his throne. He was, in truth, mightier than the archbishop, mightier in some ways than the king himself, as both king and archbishop in due time discovered.

Now when a man is raised to such a position of power and such a degree of popularity as a preacher, one of two things will be likely to come of it. If his conscience is larger than his vanity, he will become a

martyr to his cause. If his vanity is larger than his conscience, his cause will become a martyr to him. Hus's conscience and love of truth were immensely larger than his vanity, if indeed there was any vanity in the man, and so he himself became the martyr. His very position was now heading him towards the fire that was to consume him. The necessity of that position, as spiritual guide and instructor of the thousands that thronged his preaching, drove him to an earnest and independent study of the Scriptures. If his chapel is to be any true house of bread he must have the bread to break. And the more he studies the Sacred Scriptures, the more profoundly does he become convinced that the writings of Wiclif are in accordance with them. He finds himself in growing sympathy with the English reformer. Current facts lend confirmation to his writings. What has been written in England concerning the endless squabbles of ecclesiastics for place and power, concerning the simony and greed of prelates and priests, concerning the false confidence which Christian people are reposing in a life of formalism and pretense, holds equally true in Bohemia. He translates the books and commends them to others. Their thought and spirit get into his sermons. Through his influence Bohemia itself is rapidly becoming saturated with Wicliffian thought.<sup>1</sup>

But a state of things exists in the university which

<sup>1</sup> A recent writer has brought to light the fact that Hus, in his own writings upon contemporary evils, largely appropriated Wiclif's work, — adopting whole chapters, indeed, with no greater changes than the substitution of *Boemia* for Wiclif's *Anglia*, and of *Rex Boemorum* for *Rex Anglorum*. — Dr. Johann Loserth, *Wiclif and Hus*, book ii., ch. 10.

is about to cause trouble. Four nations are represented among the students, — Bavaria, Saxony, Poland, and Bohemia. Each is represented in its council and has a voice in its government. Each foreign nation is equal in every respect to the home nationality; so that when the question comes up before the council of tolerating or condemning the writings of Wiclif, they are swiftly condemned by a vote of three to one. Some fellow-officer soon after sees Hus with one of Wiclif's tracts in his hand, and remonstrates with him. "Do you not know that the council has sent Wiclif and his writings to perdition?" "I only wish," is the brave reply, "that my soul, when liberated from my body, may be in the place where Wiclif is."<sup>1</sup>

But the Bohemian spirit is aroused. Both students and professors feel the tyranny of this foreign majority. They appeal to the king; the basis of representation is changed. The government of the university is made what it professes to be — national. Hus is again put at the head of it, and twenty-five hundred German students withdraw at once from Prague and from Bohemia, and found the still famous University of Leipsic. But it was a victory for Hus, which still held his face towards the fatal fire; that German wrath will make itself felt by and by in the Council of Constance, which will doom him to the stake. It will join with the ecclesiastics all over the continent, who already fear and hate the brave, strong preacher of the Bethlehem Chapel, who persists in showing up

<sup>1</sup> An answer which reminds us of Father Taylor's witty response, made in the same spirit, to one who suggested that probably Dr. Channing was in perdition, — "Well, I had n't thought of it, but — *won't he change the character of the place?*"

the rottenness of their system and the baseness of their conduct.

At this time we must remember that that long-standing disgrace of which I spoke in the last lecture, the papal schism, still exists. There are two popes, one at Rome and one at Avignon; some adhere to one, some to the other. Hus, like Wiclif before him, rejects both, claiming that Jesus Christ alone is head of the church. A majority at the great universities at Oxford and Paris and Prague believe that the two popes should resign; or, if they will not resign, should be deposed and a new pope elected. And so a council is called to meet in Pisa in 1409, with this object in view. The Popes are summoned, but refuse to recognize the authority of the council. A vote of deposition is passed, and the council elects another pope, and the only result is that matters are more complicated than ever, and, instead of two popes, there are three. Alexander V., the new Pope, asserts his rights, however, and among his earliest official acts he issues a bull in favor of the mendicants. This arouses afresh the preacher of Bethlehem Chapel. He reforges Wiclif's old bolts, and hurls them right and left with tremendous effect. He makes it hot for these vagrants, going up and down Bohemia, intruding themselves into the work of better men; selling their dried bones and lying indulgences; hearing confessions and peddling out worthless pardons; proclaiming their vows of poverty, and laying their greedy hands on the earnings of the poor, and extorting by their terrific bugbears the dying bequests of the rich.

And the ecclesiastics far and near begin to cry heresy. An old Bohemian chronicler observes that "while Hus rebuked the vices of the laity, he was

only praised. Men said the Spirit of God spoke through him. But just as soon as he attacked the Pope and the higher and lower clergy, rebuking their pride, avarice, simony, and other vices, and claiming that they should not accumulate property, the whole priesthood rose up against him, saying, 'He is an incarnate devil — a heretic.'"<sup>1</sup> The archbishop himself grew jealous, and summoned all holders of heretical books, especially the writings of Wiclif, Hus, and Jerome, to bring them to him, and a multitude are brought, — two hundred or more of Wiclif's, — "carefully written and splendidly bound," and committed to the flames. But the university resists the summons, claiming that it owes no allegiance to the archbishop, but holds directly from the Pope. It appeals, but the appeal is of no avail. The archbishop's authority is indorsed by a bull from the Pope, which not only decrees all Wicliffian literature to the flames, but furthermore forbids Hus to preach any more from Bethlehem pulpit. From this latter prohibition Hus again appeals from the Pope ill-informed to the Pope well-informed, and calmly sets forth the reasonable grounds of his appeal. But the archbishop waits for no further issue, but proceeds to book-burning, and, still further, solemnly excommunicates the recusant students and their leader, Master John Hus. And then all Bohemia was on fire with indignation. The king cursed, the queen wept, the nobility protested with more vigor than elegance, the people were enraged; even the rabble composed vulgar ballads and sung profane and ribald songs under the archbishop's windows, until that lordly functionary trembled in his bedchamber more from fear than from wrath. And

<sup>1</sup> Gillett, i. 143.

the real result was that Wiclif's books multiplied more rapidly than they were burned ; and Master Hus, with king and queen and nobles and town and gown all at his back, went on preaching in Bethlehem Chapel as Bethlehem Chapel even had not heard him preach before.

Of course, he is now brought by his conduct more immediately into conflict with the Pope.

To this pope we must pay our brief respects. It is Pope John XXIII.<sup>1</sup> Of all the moral monstrosities that ever found their way into the papal chair, he was one of the most immoral and the most monstrous. In his boyhood vicious and unfilial, in his youth following the profession of a pirate on the sea and of a bandit upon the land, there was almost no form of wickedness with which he was unacquainted, no phase of cruelty which he had not practiced. He deliberately betook himself to the life of an ecclesiastic because he thought it offered him a safer, surer, and speedier method of gratifying his lusts, and of gaining the wealth and power coveted by his avarice and ambition. It is generally considered that his predecessor in the papal chair came to his death by poison administered by his (John's) hand, and that he then, to use a modern but expressive phrase, bulldozed the conclave into conferring the tiara upon himself. Such was John XXIII., who made the name of John so disgraceful that no successor in the papal chair has ventured to assume it. It would take the rarest degree of sainthood to lift it out of that depth of infamy into which its last possessor plunged it.

This was the man with whom Hus now had to do, a man not to be trifled with, who was as cruel and re-

<sup>1</sup> Alexander V. died in 1410, the year following his election.

morseless a pirate in the Church as he had ever been upon the sea. In the summer of 1412 he put Hus under the ban. I have already explained the force of such an edict. "None might give him food or drink, light or fire. None might buy of him or sell to him. None might converse or hold intercourse with him. None might give him a night's lodging or even a draught of water. Every city, village, or castle where he might reside was put under interdict. The sacraments could not be administered there. All religious worship was suspended there. If he died excommunicate he was to be denied burial, or if he was excommunicated being dead and buried, his body was to be torn from its grave and exposed to be wasted by the elements or consumed by beasts of prey."<sup>1</sup>

And the Pope meant to do the work thoroughly. Not content with launching the curse with all its weight against Hus, he demanded that the Bethlehem Chapel should be leveled to the ground, lest it should remain a centre of pestilent heresy.

At first Hus paid no regard to the ban, but went on with his preaching and teaching as before; and it speaks a world of honor to the faith and loyal courage of the Bohemians that not only his chapel still stood, but that it was still thronged, like a house of bread as it was, by hungry hearers. Of course, there were multitudes who avoided him as they would have shunned one who was stricken with the plague, while all who followed him or listened to him were banned with him. And this inevitably led to a distressing state of things in the city. Its social and commercial interests would suffer seriously. Hus would have been still protected by the king and by the nobles and

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Gillett, i. 226.

by the large majority of the university, had he chosen to remain ; but he unselfishly determined, for a while at least, to depart ; and so, making a solemn appeal to God, he goes forth, like the scape-goat of old, into the wilderness.

But even this probably increased his power instead of diminishing it. The walls of his chapel now were expanded to the horizon, and its dome lifted to the sky. He preaches in field and wood. He talks, unknown, to peasants. He reads everywhere the tracts of Wiclif. He blows that spark into a broader flame. Coming himself continually into clearer light, he spreads everywhere among the people the light which he has himself. Freely he has received, he freely gives. He inculcates the plain and practical duties of piety. It is the life of men which he is trying to elevate, not to cast down the Pope. He wants them to trust in realities and not in shams. "Why do you worship that cross of wood?" he cries. "Two sticks placed cross-wise are not more holy than when laid side by side. Why do you confess to these wandering monks? Who has made them judges over you? Lay your way open before the Lord. Confess your sins to the true judge. Declare your faults not only with the tongue, but with the conscience, and then believe, trust, and hope to obtain mercy." And the people everywhere repeated these sayings of his. "This man," said one of his enemies, "is sending his messengers everywhere, to nobles, to soldiers, to common people, to women."

Some one tells him in his wanderings, that since he has been put under the Pope's ban one of his oldest and dearest friends, a theological professor in the university, has deserted him and gone over to the side of the Pope. His only answer, free from all bitterness,



is: "Truth is my friend and Palecz is my friend, but both being my friends, Truth I must honor in preference." What suffers most in the man is the pastor's heart. Again and again he writes to the flock at Bethlehem Chapel in this strain: "God knows how I long to be with you and instructing you. For twelve years it has been my greatest consolation to observe your diligence in hearing God's word and to witness the true and sincere repentance of many. But pray for me, that in all places where a need exists, in cities, in villages, in castles, in the fields, in the forests, wherever I can be of any use, pray for me that the word of God may not be kept back in me." He has witnessed a good confession in Bethlehem Chapel, a good confession in that still broader chapel whose walls have been the mountains round about Bohemia and whose roof is the open sky. He has one other last confession to make with "the noble army of martyrs."

During this period of Hus's voluntary exile from Bohemia, in the year 1413, the Emperor Sigismund and Pope John XXIII. agreed upon arrangements for a general council, to be held in the city of Constance in the following year. The object of the council, as originally contemplated, was that which had so often challenged the interest and employed the diplomacy of both civil and ecclesiastical rulers in vain, the restoration of the unity of the Church and its purification from other abuses. But Bohemian affairs had of late become so prominent under the immense personal influence of Hus, that it was determined to give them an equally prominent place in the deliberations of the council. For this reason it was important that Hus should be summoned and placed on trial. The Bohemian question could only be settled by dealing with its

head in person. Constance of itself was an insignificant town, but that council made its name immortal. Not only the great importance of the questions to be discussed, but the character and constitution of the council itself, made it nearly the most important, and perhaps altogether the most impressive, ecclesiastical assemblage ever gathered. "It embraced nearly all the men of the age, of any eminence in learning, station, or authority." All Christendom contributed to the mighty throng;<sup>1</sup> forty thousand strangers were quartered in and about the little city; the buildings of the town were utterly inadequate to the concourse. Booths and sheds were erected without the walls, and far away into the adjacent country. Thousands lived in camp. Entertainments of every sort were multiplied for soldiers and servants and caterers. A historian of the time, commenting upon its magnitude, tells us that thirty thousand horses might have been counted at one time within the city's circuit. There were thirty cardinals, twenty archbishops, one hundred and fifty bishops, a multitude of abbots and doctors, and four thousand priests. Among the sovereigns were the Elector Palatine, the Electors of Mentz and Saxony, the Dukes of Austria, of Bavaria, and of Silesia, with their respective retinues. There were margraves and counts and barons and noblemen and knights almost without number. Besides all these there was a miscellaneous multitude of all trades and professions, and of no trade or profession, such as an unparalleled occasion would be likely to draw together for business, for pleasure, or for mischief. For four years this mighty council was

<sup>1</sup> L'Enfant, *Histoire du Concile de Constance*, tom. i., 80, 81, ed. Amsterdam, 1727.

in session. With the various discussions which occupied it I can now have nothing to do, save those which immediately bear upon the destinies of Hus. To this council, then, Hus received from the Emperor Sigismund a safe conduct, charging all people to aid him in his journey, to refrain from molesting him, to regard the safety of his person, to infringe in nowise upon his liberty. But he was apprehensive from the first that the end of his career was at hand. He was no longer to be girded round by the fortress-like walls of his beloved Bohemia, and by the safer security of the loving hearts of those whom he was wont to call "his dear Bohemians." Could he take them with him they would offer him but feeble protection in such a Vanity Fair. He does the last things as one who is going upon a returnless journey. And then upon the 14th of October he sets out, with two or three faithful friends, for what is to be more like Pandemonium broke loose, than a council of the Church of God on earth. But the pledge of the Emperor will of course be sacred; and he is joyful in the thought that he will have the opportunity to defend his doctrines, and to vindicate his conduct before the assembled representatives of Christendom. But never was pledge more villainously broken, or a hope more cruelly disappointed. For eighteen days he is on his way, and everywhere meets with cheer and encouragement. The country people venerate his name and are glad to get a sight of his face. He arrives at length on the 3d of November, and for three weeks keeps in close seclusion. He is a man of peace and never yet stirred up strife for strife's sake. The Pope has for the time suspended his sentence of excommunication and given him the most solemn pledges of personal safety.

And yet, before the month goes by, and before his case has been even called for a hearing, the words of both emperor and pope are causelessly violated, and he is seized, for no assigned or assignable reason, and thrown into the dungeon of the Dominican monastery. I said for no assignable reason; a reason *was* given, the reason which Rome in all ages has been accustomed to give, that it would be wrong to keep faith with a heretic. A pitiful begging of the whole question, for that was the very point at issue which the council was to decide: whether he was a heretic or not. I will not linger to describe this wretched travesty and mockery of trial, nor the horrors of imprisonment with insufficient food, until he was wasted almost to a shadow; the unmitigated darkness and loathsomeness of his dungeon, in which he could not stand erect or recline at length; its companionship of chattering rats; its clammy floor and walls; the fetters which he wore by day and the stocks of iron in which he was compelled to pass the nights. From the 6th of December until the 6th of the following July he was an uncondemned captive. And not only uncondemned, but practically unheard. Four hearings, so-called, he did have, but they were hearings of the council, and not hearings of Hus. There were dreary iterations and reiterations of charges, with not the slightest attempt at substantiation and with no permission of response. "Recant! Recant!" was the demand, but there was nothing to recant. How can one recant what he has never held? Hus's differences with the Church had not been as to the substance of her teachings, but as to the character of her life. And that that was altogether out of the way this great council was itself an evidence and a confession, called, as it had been

primarily, to purge the Church of inveterate scandals. "Convict me of heresy by the teachings of Christ and his apostles (avowedly you have no truly constituted pope), and I will cheerfully recant. But as yet there is nothing to recant. I cannot abjure errors that have been imputed to me by false witnesses." And so it was once, twice, thrice. The fourth and last time he is dragged up out of his dungeon. The cat's silly play with the mouse is over now; he is pronounced once for all an incorrigible heretic. They go through with the meaningless farce of putting on him a priestly robe and stripping it off again, of thrusting into his hand a sacramental chalice and snatching it away, as though a priest unto God could be thus made and unmade. How to deal with his tonsure puzzles them. His head is shaven, how to *unshave* it and then shave it again is the question, as important to be sure as any they have to settle. Also, whether the work shall be done with razor or with scissors. Fair parallel of some questions agitated just now. At length they settle it by clipping his ring of hair, north, south, east, and west, in cross-shape with scissors.<sup>1</sup> They call it

<sup>1</sup> Mais lorsqu'il fallut lui ôter les marques de la tonsure, il s'éleva une grande contestation entre les Prélats, pour savoir, s'il falloir y employer le rasoir ou seulement les ciseaux. Surquoi Jean Hus se tournant vers l'Empereur, "Voyez," dit-il, "ils ne sauroient même s'accorder entre eux sur la maniere de m'insulter." Reichenthal dit qu'on le lava, afin de lui ôter les marques de sa tonsure, mais qu'il se moquoit de toutes ces ceremonies. Enfin les ciseaux l'ayant emporte sur le rasoir, on lui coupa les cheveux en croix afin qu'il ne parût aucune marque de couronne. Nous apprenons du Droit Canon que cette degradation met le Prêtre au rang des Laïques et que quoiqu'elle ne lui ôte pas le caractere qui est indelible, elle le rende pour jamais incapable d'exercer les fonctions de la Prêtrise. — L'Enfant, *Histoire du Concile de Constance*, tom. i., 408, ed. Amsterdam, 1727.

his degradation from the priesthood. It is the degradation of priesthood, to be sure, but not of his. And then they cry, He belongs to the Church no longer, let him be burnt. And Sigismund, forsworn, perjured, consciously, blushingly guilty, lets them have their way, and, like Pilate, washes the hands which a sea could never cleanse.

The sentence is not delayed. The council has other work to do, and goes on with its pottering business, while the very grandest soul that the world knew that day goes out to ascend in his chariot of fire. Like the song of the lark, which floats down the air when the sweet singer itself is no longer visible, so out of the cloud of smoke and flame are heard the last words of the martyr's mortal language, "Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace and good will towards men. We praise Thee! We bless Thee! We worship Thee! We glorify Thee! We give thanks to Thee for thy great glory!"

The mighty host of pilgrims stand silent as though smitten by some vision of heavenly apocalypse, and when the smoke clears away there are some ashes and a handful of iron links hanging to a blackened stake. But John Hus is with God.



IV.

SAVONAROLA.

A. D. 1452-1498.

As the moon  
Doth by the rolling of her heavenly sphere,  
Hide and reveal the strand unceasingly;  
So fortune deals with Florence.

DANTE, *Paradise*, xv. 80.





#### IV.

##### SAVONAROLA.

A. D. 1452-1498.

THE drama of history presents us with no scenes more fascinating in their splendor, or more impressive in their tragedy, than those which the fifteenth century saw enacted in Italy. Private magnificence reached its zenith, and common wretchedness sunk to its nadir. Art achieved its most brilliant triumphs, and religion fell into its dreariest formalisms. Government, nominally republican, was the plaything of strong-handed and unprincipled adventurers, who were rich, or mighty, or cunning enough to control the nerveless popular will. Learning among the clergy meant dabbling in scholasticism ; among the higher or wealthier laity, some slight acquaintance with pagan writers, and a love for classic antiquities ; among the common people there was little or none. It is almost enough, in order to describe the moral and social life of the century, to say that it was the age of the Medici at Florence, and of the Borgias at Rome ; an age of culture wedded to corruption ; an age whose external garb was elegance, whose inmost heart was moral rotteness ; an age whose only grand enthusiasms were for art and vice ; all other enthusiasms were accounted vulgar and had died out. Patriotism and religion, at least, if not dead, were comatose. The one needed a Judas Maccabæus, the other a John the Baptist.

The reformatory movement which we contemplate in the life of Savonarola, which is nearly coincident with the latter half of the fifteenth century, stands by itself. It has no obvious connection, either local or dynamic, with any movement which we have considered, or any which we shall consider. There was no agitation leading up to it as the work of Wiclif led up to that of Hus; it was followed by none as nearly consequent upon it as the work of Hus was followed by that of Luther. It was not, like the work of these, the *inauguration* of a mighty spiritual movement, to be taken up by strong successors when the author laid it down, to sweep on in gathering power and greater triumphs, but it begins and ends before our eyes. It could not be represented by any such symbolic picture as that one of Wiclif kindling a spark, which Hus blows into a flame, at which Luther, in turn, lights his torch; but in this case the spark is lighted, the flame kindled, and the torch waved by a single hand, and when that hand drops the torch there is none to take it up, and the light goes out. It is like a song, which may tarry for a little in the memory, but whose notes do not linger in the air when the voice that raised it has become silent. And so Savonarola stands alone, like Melchisedek, without any recognizable predecessor or successor, his reformation as unique and circumscribed by definite historic lines as the literary or artistic glory of that Florence which saw its beginning, and middle, and end. It is remarkable that a work which, while it was going on, gathered so great interest about itself, should have taken so little from the past and bequeathed so little to the future. So far as we can see, Savonarola left little heritage to the subsequent ages besides the story

of his career and the memory of his example. He stands thus in strange contrast with the other famous men of his age. The Laurentian Library, founded by Cosmo de Medici, and enriched by Lorenzo the Magnificent, still abides, a part of the permanent pride of Florence. The lovely conceits and dream-like images to which the brush of Fra Angelico gave birth still adorn the convent of San Marco, where Savonarola prayed, and taught, and governed not only his monks, but Florence itself. Michael Angelo, who chiseled marble furiously during the very years when the fiery friar was subduing harder hearts, bequeathed to the world work that, after four centuries, is as fresh and forceful as when it left his hand. But of Savonarola only a memory lingers. He seemed to crash into the world's history suddenly, and from some far off space, and to leave it as suddenly and mysteriously, like a comet in a hyperbolic orbit, which once invades the circles of the solar system; never seen before, to be never seen again. He was like the prophet Jonah at Nineveh: a stern and fiery preacher of righteousness, accomplishing an immediate work, and then both the preacher and his work passing out of history.

Girolamo Savonarola, though identified with Florence, was not a Florentine. He was born at Ferrara, of an honorable family, September 21, 1452. His grandfather was a learned physician of considerable renown, who had been called to the court of that state by its sovereign, who was a patron of learning, and delighted to surround himself by men of art and letters. It was intended by his family that Girolamo should follow the profession of his grandfather, and maintain the traditions and the local relations of his

house, and the work of his education proceeded in accordance with this intent. But, as it has turned out in so many instances, the lines of manhood's character were already so strongly cut in the disposition of the boy that it could not be moulded and compressed within the lines of parental purpose. Eaglets cannot be converted into rooks, take them as near the shell as you please. The prominent feature of his childhood seems to have been a keen moral sensibility, which was impressed even to anguish by the sights and sounds of events that were continually occurring about him. Ferrara, now a solemn and decayed old town, with grass growing in its streets, and with less than a third of its former population, was at that time one of the busiest and one of the gayest capitals of Europe, sheltering a hundred thousand people within its walls. Like all the Italian cities of the Middle Ages, its glory was inseparably wedded with disgrace. Splendor and cruelty walked hand in hand. In the ducal palace perpetual feastings were going on in gorgeous saloons, where the clinking of glass and crystal overhead was matched by the clanking of fetters in the dungeons underneath. The masters of social order passed easily and without any apparent gradations of feeling, from splendors to horrors, from horrors to splendors. From the association of his family with the court, the boy was brought into early contact with and familiar knowledge of its magnificence, and the violent contrast which it presented to the sorrows and wretchedness of the people. He felt himself in a world where all things were mismatched. He was living in times that were out of joint. He wandered by himself. His great relief was to get out of the city whose social disorders he was powerless to affect, and to pore

over his Bible and St. Thomas Aquinas in the peaceful meadows of the Po. Sometimes his sorrows would drive him to one or other of the churches, where for hours he would lie prostrate upon the pavement in some obscure corner, and wet the marble with his tears. So early in life did he pass through that experience, the puzzle of every thoughtful life, which the Hebrew Psalmist was the first to voice, and over whose solution the social science of the world is still perplexed: "I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. Therefore his people return hither, and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say 'How doth God know?' and 'Is there knowledge with the Most High?' Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world: they increase in riches. When I thought to know this it was too painful for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God." Singularly like this language of the old Hebrew Psalmist are some words of a youthful poem composed at this very time by Savonarola: "I see the whole world in confusion; every virtue and every noble habit gone. There is no shining light. None are ashamed of their vices. He is happy who lives by rapine and feeds on the blood of another, who robs widows and his own infant children, and who drives the poor to ruin. That soul is deemed refined and rare who gains the most by fraud and force, who scorns heaven and Christ, and whose constant thoughts are bent on others' destruction."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Villari, i., 15.

Just now there came into his life an episode which, had he been permitted to have his own will, would have changed his whole career, and we should have assembled here this evening to listen to an entirely different story, whose subject would probably have been — not Savonarola. There came into his mind a vision, transitory, but very bright, of a possible life of real happiness even in this world, and he turned aside for a little to pursue it. A family of refugees from Florence came to live in Ferrara in the house next his father's. There was one beautiful daughter. The sorrows of the banished exiles touched Girolamo's sensitive nature, and pity led to love. He dared to ask for the young Florentine's hand, but she frostily informed him that a Strozzi could never wed with a Savonarola. His pride of birth was at least equal to hers, and a refusal for such a reason was sufficient to turn his love to scorn.

Though this event doubtless had its influence by way of adding weight to his determination, yet it was not the principal reason for the course of life upon which he now entered. His often-repeated prayer for many years had been, "O Lord! make known to me the way in which I am to guide my soul!" Deeper and deeper the conviction had grown that the religious life was the only refuge to which he could betake himself. Conscience pointed to the monastery. In no other way was it possible in the Italy of that day, to openly profess a devotion to the service of God and the welfare of human souls; and desire powerfully seconded conscience. His tender sensibilities cannot endure a parting from his mother, and he takes advantage of a holiday when the family are all from home, and goes away to Bologna, and seeks for admission to

the Dominican monastery there. He asks only that he may be employed in some menial service, in mending the garments of the brethren, or digging in the convent garden. But the superior, after a little, penetrates this veil of genuine modesty, finds out that the novice knows the Bible and St. Thomas, and that he is versed in natural science and letters, and sets him at work as a teacher of the other novices; makes him a lecturer, and finally sends him out as a preaching friar. His preaching does not make much impression; his voice is harsh, his ways are awkward. For seven years, from 1475 to 1482, when he is thirty years old, he continues in the convent at Bologna, giving himself to the study of the Sacred Scriptures until, as the story goes, he knew the Bible every word by heart. He dwells upon the prophets chiefly, compares the dark times of Hebrew history with these Italian days. He finds himself in sympathy with the fierce denunciations made in old time against unrighteousness, the avarice of priests, and the cruelty of rulers. He sees the old prophetic visions repeated. They visit his own dreams and fill his waking thoughts until he feels himself possessed of the prophetic spirit. He feels that the clouds of Jehovah's wrath impend over Italy, as they once hung over Syria. He is in manifest training to be a preacher of "the wrath to come." One important thing these seven years in the Bologna convent taught him, which was necessary to complement the knowledge he had previously gained. Before going into this retreat he had become deeply convinced of the ruin of the world. He now became equally impressed that there was a similar state of things in the Church. He had only fled from one evil to fall into another. There was almost as little of sainthood in the sphere he had entered,



as there was of truth and honesty in that which he had left.

In 1482 he is sent by his superior to preach in Ferrara, his native city ; but his stay is short and his success indifferent. Whether it is for the old proverbial reason, that a prophet is without honor in his own country, as he himself suspected, or, as others have suggested, because he could not descend to the vulgar sensationalisms, and low buffooneries, and questionable jokes, which then formed the stock in trade of the average preaching friar, from one cause or another he gets no hold upon the popular interest. And a war being imminent just then in Northeastern Italy, the convent is disbanded. The monks are sent here and there, and Savonarola is assigned, we may well believe by a divine predestination, to the convent of San Marco in Florence, with which all his work henceforth, to the end of life, is to be associated. It is here and now that his life for the first time becomes historic.

As he enters these cool and quiet precincts, he may well be excused for thinking that he has at last found the blessed retreat which his vexed and weary spirit has craved so long. It seems like a bit of heaven let down to earth. Sanctity, repose, and beauty are all the immediate suggestions of the place. For a thoughtful, studious, devout, patriotic, beauty-loving man such as Savonarola was, the convent of San Marco must have seemed a very paradise. Built some forty years before by the munificence of Cosmo de Medici, it had been enriched by him and by his grandson Lorenzo with priceless treasures of literature and of art. Here had been deposited what was at the time the rarest collection of books and manuscripts to be found in Italy. The walls of chapel and

cloister had been adorned by that angelic artist who prayed while he painted on his knees, whose every lightest touch was a devout aspiration. Here St. Antonino had shed abroad his lovely charities till they filled the streets and houses of Florence like a sweet and enduring perfume, so that even to this day his name is uttered by Florentines in the hushed voice of reverent love. Here scholars and artists came from all parts of Italy to consult its books and to study its pictures. Such was the place to which the young friar had come for the beginning of his career. He little thought it was the splendidly illuminated initial of a tragedy that would end in fire and blood. Florence did not know that day what manner of man she had admitted to her hospitality in the person of the obscure preaching friar. As little did he know the Florence that lay around his peaceful retreat. They were soon to become acquainted.

Very naturally the friar became acquainted with Florence before the city became acquainted with him. For the first five or six years of his residence he is unconsciously preparing for his work. Let us look briefly at the facts as they met him.

Lorenzo de Medici is now at the height of his fame, and has everything his own way in Florence. It is hardly necessary to repeat the story of his rise. Florence was nominally a republic, but really a little despotism. The Medici family having long before risen to great wealth in mercantile operations, had gained controlling power in civil affairs, and had held it now for three generations. The people, naturally indolent, fond of splendor, proud of their city's easy preëminence in beauty, in architecture, in art, were content to have the power lodged where it was, so long as it

was strongly held, and they were kept in good humor by festivals, and holidays, and entertainments. And apart from the fact that the people were slaves, the Medici had given them much to be proud of. What Cosmo and Lorenzo had done for San Marco, they had done for every quarter of the city. The tokens of their munificence remain to this day, and have gone far for four hundred years to make Italy a shrine dear to the pilgrim of art or of devotion. But the pride and greed of the rulers had taken all this gratification out of the sweat and blood of the people. And in Lorenzo, who was now the despot of the hour, both the greatness and the wickedness of his family seemed to have culminated. He had secured his position by the murder of his brother. "He had first conciliated the affection of the higher and the devotion of the lower classes, by his munificence and works of general utility, and then had extinguished every spark of personal independence." Sagacious but cruel, refined but without honor, cultured but corrupt, of most exquisite tastes but of equally profligate habits, writing a sonnet in praise of some virtue in the morning and devoting the night ensuing to debaucheries, neither fearing God nor regarding man where he had any slightest desire to accomplish, shrinking from neither the use of poison nor of stiletto if one life or a hundred stood in his way, Lorenzo was magnificent, to be sure, as the ages have called him, but it was the magnificence which Milton has ascribed to Satan himself. Such was the splendid fiend who was lording it over the Florentines when the monk of Ferrara came to San Marco. And "like prince, like people," he had made his subjects drunken with the wine of his own intoxication. He had done his best to turn Florence

into a pagan city, and had well-nigh succeeded. He had favored, of course, the revival of ancient learning, and imparted great enthusiasm to the pursuits of heathen literature, until pagan manners were affected by the better classes, and even the clergy had come to set a value upon the authority of a classic author above that of Isaiah or St. Paul, and an ancient statue of Pan or Jove was regarded with a reverence greater than was due to an image of the Virgin or the Crucifix. Though if the latter were elegantly carved they might of course be admitted to the artistic pantheon.

So the monk becomes acquainted with Florence, but he finds that Florence is viler than Ferrara. He cannot escape from that terrible thought of the "wrath to come," the wrath that *must* come, as God himself is true, and just, and holy. If earth will not purge itself, the heavens must break, and let down their floods of fire and brimstone. He preaches now and then in Florence; but hearers are few and indifferent, twenty-five or thirty in his audience — men in general prefer a different fare. And so he is sent out to preach in various towns of Lombardy; this in the end of 1486.

Everywhere he finds the same cloud of wrath impending. His very soul is overwhelmed within him. His nights are spent in prayers and tears, and when he slumbers there are those visions of the wrath to come, the sword of God hanging over Italy. Here at last his mouth is opened, and he speaks like the messenger of God. He finds response. The people begin to see dimly what he sees so clearly. They come in multitudes. He begins to feel that he has not mistaken his mission. About this time he is called to attend a meeting of the chapter of his order in which were to be discussed certain doctrines of theology, and certain

questions of discipline. For the dogmas of theology in question, or against them, he has nothing to say. They seem to him of little moment. The monk sits silent, indifferent, and unobserved. But when the questions of discipline are up, his spirit is aroused. Discipline, — he thinks there is need enough of that! It is not a doctrinal but a moral reformation that is the church's crying need. "In the ancient times the Church had wooden chalices and golden prelates: now, she has golden chalices and wooden prelates." He scathes the vices and corruption of the clergy like an old prophet. Among his listeners there is Pico della Mirandola, the most learned man of his age, one who has large influence at the Florentine court, and who is admired by the great Lorenzo for his learning. He is won to the side and to the friendship of the fiery friar. He recognizes the truth and the genius that are in the man. He informs Lorenzo, who, bad as he is, is yet willing to gather into Florence all genius, whether in religion or anything else, as a trophy of his own magnificence. He wishes this wonderful friar to be recalled to his convent and retained there, and his wish is law. Because his superiors summon him, to whom he has vowed obedience, Savonarola returns to Florence, not because the great Lorenzo wishes it. He has only feelings of repugnance for the tyrant. His very return will only hasten that bitter conflict with the Medici and all their purposes, towards which he is being inevitably carried. He has little thought of any new successes as a preacher in Florence, but Pico has spread great reports of his genius and his power. Men come to his lectures in the convent. There is something fresh and forceful in the man, something different from the ordinary monkish chaff, something

weird and fascinating, moreover, in his exposition of the Apocalypse, and his application of its visions to the times and the people. He dwells in the terrors mainly, and yet he does not ignore the gentler side of the gospel. Hear this on the love of Jesus Christ. "The love of Jesus Christ is to be seen in that warm affection for Him which leads the faithful to wish that his soul may become almost a part of that of Christ, and that the living principle in the Lord may be reproduced in himself, not in the way of an external image but as an inward and divine inspiration. This love is omnipotent, uniting the finite creature with the Infinite Creator. Man, in fact, rises continually from humanity to something divine when he is animated by this love, which is the sweetest of all affections, penetrates the soul, acquires a mastery over the body, and causes the faithful to walk on earth, rapt as it were in the spirit."<sup>1</sup> This monk had something to say worth the hearing. He spoke to men out of the Word of God and his own costly experience. He was no ignorant prater or retailer of old fables. Moreover he was in deep sympathy with the wrongs of the people, while he was both indignant and compassionate towards their hypocrisy and sin. The convent chapel is too narrow to hold all who wish to hear him. They fill the cloisters and the court. He must go to the cathedral. He is getting a strong grip upon the city's conscience. He spares no class from the Medici down. His boldness brings him into conflict with Lorenzo. He is warned that he must be more moderate. He understands that those who admonish him are from the neighborhood of the palace. "Go tell your master," he thunders, "to prepare to repent of his sins, for the Lord spares no one, and has no fear of the princes of the earth!"

<sup>1</sup> Villari, i., 109.

A month or two after, he is chosen prior of San Marco, the institution which has been built and adorned and sustained by the Medici, but it makes no change in his fidelity. He feels his responsibility to God alone. It had been the invariable custom for the newly-elected prior to go immediately upon his election and pay homage to Lorenzo. He ignored the precedent utterly. He knew the wickedness of the man. He knew how he was oppressing and debauching the people. What concord could there be between Christ and Belial? How could he pay respects to a tyrant for whom he had only abhorrence and detestation? He could not plunge into such an abyss of self-contempt. He would not so wrong his conscience, and stultify the truth which he had spoken in the ears of all Florence. The tyrant knows the monk's power and is very politic. He thinks it better to propitiate than to crush him. He sends rich presents to the convent, and large donations to the poor; but it is of no avail. He sends for a rival preacher, if possible to preach the prior down, and that too fails, for the people have learned to love their great preacher, and have faith in him; they know him for a true, and honest, and godly man. And so he preaches on, and all Florence listens. Lorenzo, too, believes in him, though he hates him. The following year, 1492, Lorenzo is taken with his final illness, and as he approaches death he wants a confessor. "For whom shall we send?" ask his attendants. "Send for the prior of San Marco; he is an honest man," said the dying reprobate. "No other ever dared say No! to me." And the friar did not say No to this request. Before he will absolve him, however, he demands three things. "First, it is necessary that you should have a full and

lively faith in the mercy of God." "That I have most fully." "Second, you must restore that which you have unjustly taken, or enjoin your sons to restore it for you." The tyrant hesitates, but finally assents. "Third, you must restore liberty to the people of Florence." At this Lorenzo turns his face to the wall and is silent. But the monk knows how to say No, and leaves the sick man to die unshriven. It is a drawn battle between greed and remorse.

Savonarola now appears before us in a second historic aspect, as the *Restorer of liberty to Florence*.

This year of Lorenzo's death was a crisis, not only in the affairs of Florence, but of all Italy. His shrewdness and moderation and tact in political affairs had made him a controlling influence throughout the peninsula. He had held the balance of power. His position, both geographically and dynamically, had made him a mediator between the chiefs of the different states. His son Piero, who now succeeded him, was, if possible, more vicious, but less politic. He was weak at the very points where his father had been strong. He was equally selfish and greedy of power, but was utterly ignorant in matters of government, so that he was despised by the people; and his rude and vulgar manners made him detested by the nobles and the neighboring princes. There had been some things to qualify and render tolerable the tyranny of the father; that of the son was unmitigated and unbearable. In the same year Pope Innocent VIII. died, and the infamous Roderigo Borgia<sup>1</sup> bought the succession to the papal chair. The character of the man is too utterly detestable to describe.<sup>2</sup> The only

<sup>1</sup> Alexander VI.

<sup>2</sup> Even Roscoe, who affects to doubt many of the stories of



language that could compass it, would be unfit to write, or even to whisper. Debauchery, venality, and murder are not terms sufficiently specific. This man had in view no less an object than the subjection of all the states of Italy, and their partition among his illegitimate sons. Piero de Medici was weak enough to be made his tool. The Pope saw his way clear, through him, to the ultimate possession of Tuscany. Under such conditions as these, what had poor Florence to hope for, but a change from the control of the Medici to that of the Borgias; or, as the proverb has it, from the frying-pan into the fire? What was to prevent? Only the fact that God himself was working; an element in the problem that neither Piero, nor Borgia, nor the Florentines had taken into account.

Savonarola kept on preaching; some late facts had added to his popularity. That Lorenzo the Magnificent had in his dying hour chosen him for his confessor, and that he had dared to refuse him absolution, the superb courage of the man, the dauntless independence, the growing freedom of his speech, his outspoken championship of the liberties of the people, the incontestible fact also that he had prophesied the death both of Lorenzo and the late pope, — all this conspired to make him what he had now incontrovertibly become, the most prominent citizen of Florence. To him all the Florentines were looking, though they hardly knew for what. In him they hoped, but they could not have defined their hopes. They were like a flock of sheep surrounded by wolves, a wolf indeed

Alexander's crimes, calls him "The scourge of Christendom, and the opprobrium of the human race." — *Life of Lorenzo* (Bohn's ed.), p. 336.

within the fold, and they looking piteously towards their shepherd. And the shepherd was faithful, even to the laying down of his life for the sheep. One wolf broke in upon them for whose advent they had not looked, but whose coming, and the direction from which he would come, Savonarola had not obscurely predicted. "A storm will break in," said he, "a storm that will shake the mountains; over the Alps, there will come against Italy one like Cyrus, of whom Isaiah wrote." And that very year Charles VIII. of France actually did come, crashing down into Italy with a great army, to seize the vacant throne of Naples. There was no quarrel between France and Florence, but Tuscany lay directly in the route of the invading army, and was an attractive field for conquest. Piero, weak and cowardly, went to meet the invader, and, to propitiate Charles, put the only defenses of the intermediate country into his hands, and thus "opened to him the defenseless city," with all its treasures and the lives of its citizens, "without any conditions of compensation or guaranties of peace." Then, for the first time, the indolent Florentine blood boiled with indignation. The people were basely betrayed by one who should, and who could have defended them. The whole city was one seething cauldron of defenseless and helpless wrath. There is only one calm spirit, and all eyes turn towards Savonarola, the prophet of the Lord. He, if any one, can tell them what to do. He is the man who dwells unmoved in the secret place of the Most High and under the shadow of the Almighty. They throng to the cathedral, and what strange directions they hear from his lips! They become still from their tumultuous passion, as the winds and waves when another voice said Peace! to the storm on Galilee.

"Your first business," he says, "is repentance. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand! O Florence, the time of thy music and dancing is at an end; now is the time for pouring out rivers of tears for your sins." "O Lord, who died for the love of us, and for our transgressions, pardon, O Lord, these poor Florentines." The writers of the time called it a miracle. The people were like little children in his hands, subdued, quiet, penitent. They send an embassy to the camp of the king, with Savonarola at its head, clad in his monkish garb: with the dignity of an old prophet he appears before the invader, recognizes his divine mission as God's instrument, and with the authority born of the consciousness of his own mission, equally divine, commands him to show mercy, as he hopes for mercy at the hands of God. "If thou forgettest the work for which He sends thee, He will choose another to fulfill it, and will let the hand of His wrath fall upon thee with terrible scourges. I say this to thee in the name of the Lord."

By general consent Savonarola becomes now the legislator of Florence. He holds such a power as neither Piero, nor Lorenzo, nor even Cosmo had ever known. Upon the expulsion of the Medici, and the speedy departure of the French army, the government was utterly disorganized. The people had so long been treated as chattels, or puppets, moved by the will of their masters, that they seemed incapable of organization, or even of harmonious action. Upon Savonarola devolved the chief burden of framing a constitution. He keeps on with his preaching. He drives home the idea that all wholesome government must begin with personal reformation, amendment of life. "Seek first the kingdom of God," he cries. That year is the

miracle of civil history. He reëstablishes the republic upon the basis of three or four simple principles: 1. Fear God. 2. Prefer the weal of the republic to thine own. 3. A general amnesty. 4. A grand council, after the pattern of Venice, but without a doge. They had had enough of doges, and chiefs, and self-seeking masters. He himself might have been king if he would, but the simple-hearted man never thought of such a thing. "Jesus Christ," he says, "shall be the only King of Florence." And in their enthusiasm the multitudes take it for their huzza, "Viva Cristo! Viva Firenze!" For himself the simple friar will have only his pulpit for a throne, and even over his pulpit he has inscribed the legend, "Jesus Christ the King of Florence." And thus for three years he exerted, as Macchiavelli asserts, an influence of unprecedented power. "Unrighteous gains were given up, deadly enemies embraced each other in love, godless sports came to an end." Lives of chastity took the place of incontinence and debauchery. The lewd scenes of the carnival gave way to the pure and beautiful rites of Palm Sunday. People made bonfires and cast into them their obscene books. It really looked for a time as if the kingdom which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, had come. But sterner scenes than any he had yet encountered were preparing for the good monk, and we are brought now to the last act of the drama, in which *he encounters the wrath of the Borgia.*

At first Alexander had no special hatred for Savonarola. But now his cherished project, of getting possession of Tuscany for his own family, seemed likely to be abortive. He had hoped to deal easily with the weak and wicked Piero. But now the Medici

were banished, and a price had been set upon their heads. And things in Florence looked hopeful, neither for their restoration, nor for his getting the prize he coveted in any other way. He knew that it was the prior's work, and so long as he was exerting that mighty sway over the people, through his pulpit, the Pope's designs must be futile. Tidings come to his ears, moreover, that Savonarola is hoping for the reformation of all Italy, upon the Florentine plan. He is preaching scathing sermons upon the papal iniquities and rapacities. His blows are felt even within the walls of San Angelo. This man must be put down, but cautiously. In July, 1495, he writes a kindly letter to Savonarola, and summons him to Rome. It is cunning, sounds like Herod's counsel to the wise men. "Much beloved Son: We hear that among all the laborers in the Lord's vineyard you show the most zeal. This greatly delights us, and we give praise therefor to Almighty God. We have heard that you affirm that what you have said of future events proceeds not from yourself but from God, and we are desirous to discourse with you in order that we may, through your mediation, know better what is pleasing to God, and practice the same. Therefore, we exhort you, in all holy obedience, to come to us without delay, who will receive you with love and with charity." The fox! The treachery is too palpable. It is the invitation of the spider to the fly. Fortunately, Savonarola was sick at the time, and had a valid excuse for remaining at home. Then a cardinal's hat is offered him, and the Pope proposes to make him Archbishop of Florence. The monk's righteous indignation is aroused afresh at the insult to his sincerity and honor. "Does he think to

tempt me with a red hat?" and he sends back the indignant answer, "I will have no other red hat from you than that which you have already given to other servants of my Master,— the red hat of flame." Then comes an imperative command to hasten immediately to Rome. Savonarola is really sick, and, moreover, worn almost to a shadow by his superhuman labors, and he cannot endure the journey. But Rodrigo Borgia is not to be outwitted nor defeated in such wise. He forbids him to preach. But the monk takes his authority from a higher power. The ban and interdict are threatened, and the monk keeps on with what strength he can. There are plots to assassinate him. The Medici have their partisans in Florence who gradually get elected into the council. A pestilence breaks out in the city, and the ignorant people, who have come to look upon Savonarola as little less than a god, get to be impatient because he does not work miracles for their relief; a breath, a murmur, a susurrus is in the air. It is fanned with skill and energy by the friends of the Medici. It grows and threatens ill. But the monk is calm, God-fearing, man-loving, through it all. The plague breaks out in his convent, where two hundred and fifty friars are living together. Rich Florentines come and offer their villas to him that he may retreat from the contagion. Retreat! he never retreated from anything but sin. But he gladly accepts them for his poor, frightened monks. The Pope's son is assassinated, and Savonarola, detesting the man, nevertheless pities the father, and sends him a kindly letter of condolence, but utterly free from any unmanly concession or breath of flattery. And so he comes to the last year of his life; he has already predicted that he shall not see

its close. He perceives the toils thickening around him; but he is courageous, and makes manly Christian warfare to the end. He is excommunicated as a heretic, though no saint of the Roman calendar ever held more faithfully to all the dogmas of the Church. But the Pope, he knows, and all the world knows, is not that Church's lawful head. His tiara has been purchased by open and shameless bribery. And Savonarola, as his last grand stand for truth and righteousness, has written letters summoning the crowned heads of Christendom to unite in calling a general council to depose this pretended pope, and heal the wounds of the Church. One of his messengers is assassinated on his journey, and a letter found upon him. It is sent to Alexander, whose ill-will is now inflamed to the pitch of ferocity, — the friar's doom is inevitably sealed. While this has been going on, however, a strange thing has occurred in Florence, which sharply turns the popular feeling against the man who has been, till now, the object of their love and veneration.

A monk of another order, jealous of Savonarola's good name, has offered to test the question of his orthodoxy by appealing to the ordeal of fire. Savonarola believes in no such nonsense; but one of his devoted monks insists upon accepting the challenge in his behalf. The fire is kindled, and the two parties are ready to walk through it. A petty discussion arises about accessories, and is kept up until it amounts almost to a public riot. All Florence is upon the scene, the dispute lasts till nightfall, and neither party has yet entered the flames, and a heavy rain closes the day and extinguishes the fire. The populace have been disappointed of their treat, and the whole

weight of their indignation falls upon Savonarola. What mattered their accessories to him if he were a true prophet? They accuse him of being an impostor, — him the best and truest friend that Florence ever had. Plainly his career is drawing to a close. Alexander will find slight barriers interposing now between him and his victim. The prior is seized, with two of his monks who have been his most faithful and loving disciples, and made a prisoner until it shall be decided whether he shall be tried in Florence, or sent to Rome to be dealt with immediately by the Pope. It is settled at last that he shall be tried at home, on the charge of being an impostor. Florence, whose brightest crown has been his life of glorious self-sacrifice, shall have for her deepest infamy that his death was within her gates, and by her own faithless hand. Day after day, for six successive days, he is dragged forth from his dungeon and examined, as the phrase is, by torture. Six days in succession, he is raised by his wrists strapped together behind his back, until his muscles are lacerated and his bones disjoined. He faints and raves alternately under the agony, but clings to the truth, — he has not taught of himself, but has striven to be God's faithful messenger. That is all that examination can get out of him, and upon that he is sentenced to be hanged and burned. Hanged and burned he is forthwith, his last words, as he goes cheerfully up to the gibbet and the flame, "My Lord was pleased to die for my sins, why should I not be glad to give up my poor life for love to Him?" And with some little faint flickerings of the liberty he had sought to give to his beloved people, Florence and Italy sank back once more into the old and indolent slavery of the mediæval centuries.



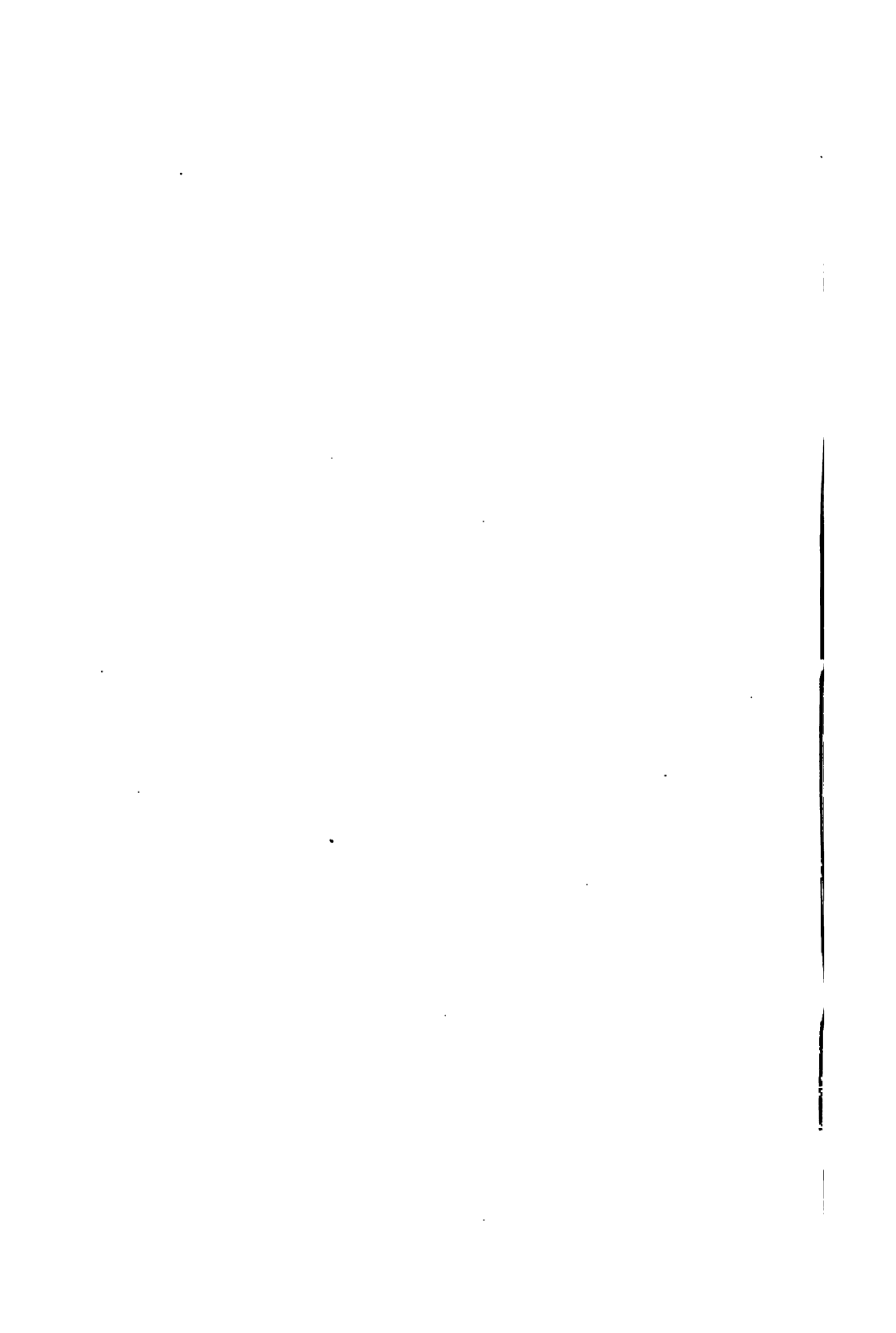


## **V.**

### **LATIMER.**

**A. D. 1480-1555.**

**In all ages, more or less, there is a new school of thought rising up under the eyes of an older school of thought. And probably in all ages the men of the old school regard with some little anxiety the ways of the men of the new school. — FRED. SEEBOHM.**



## V.

### LATIMER.

A. D. 1480-1555.

ABOUT a hundred years have passed since Wiclif rested from his labors in the quiet rectory of Lutterworth. During the lapse of that century, we have witnessed the transference of the work which he inaugurated, to the distant state of Bohemia, where John Hus raised Wiclif's spark into a flame, which was met by the counter-fires of the Council of Constance. And still later we have seen the strange, sporadic, almost miraculous work of Savonarola at Florence, appearing like a meteor out of the darkness, and falling back like a meteor into the darkness again. And now we are ready to ask, How has the good work been faring meanwhile in England? I have known forest fires, after having been subdued, and apparently extinguished, to work for a long time under the surface, fed by dry roots and by long accumulations of fallen leaves, and finally, after weeks or even months had passed by and all thought of conflagration had been quieted, to break forth with greater vigor than ever under some favoring wind or some protracted drought. Thus for a century after his death Wiclif's work went on, obscurely, but without cessation, under the surface of England's social and political life. Much had been done to check it. Edict after edict had been promul-

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gated against his writings. His books, and even his bones, had been burned by the Council of Constance. Many of his avowed disciples had been drawn into anarchy, and had brought down upon his cause the arm not only of ecclesiastical but of civil authority. His movement was seized upon by politicians, as religious movements so often have been by men who sought to avail themselves of contemporary excitements for the promotion of their own objects. And so Wiclifism — or, as it came now to be called in contempt, Lollardism — had come to be not only an object of scorn to those who were in authority, but a profession of peril to those who adopted it. “It is always the fate of popular movements, that the foolish and the bad get hold of the skirts of the wise and the good ; that, like the camp-followers of an army, all manner of vagrants attach themselves to soldiers of truth and godliness.”<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, the true doctrines preached by Wiclif never died out of England. They had taken a deep hold upon the mind and heart of the common people. There probably was no time during the century when his followers, had they dared to declare themselves, could not have been counted by thousands. His poor preachers had gone up and down the land, and had come to be loved and venerated in the cabins of the poor, as much as the mendicant monks were scorned and detested. His tracts, and especially different portions of his New Testament, were copied and passed from hand to hand, to be read to little companies of devout believers by the cottage rush-light, and sometimes in the open fields among the cattle. Herdsmen, ploughboys, and mechanics taught each

<sup>1</sup> Stoughton, *Our English Bible*, p. 50.

other the Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, in their own English tongue. Christ and the apostles seemed very near and precious to them, speaking in the simple language of the common people, and no longer in the outlandish Latin of the monks. So the fire burned vigorously under the surface of social life; so vigorously, that Longland, Bishop of Lincoln, in a single visitation of his diocese, had upwards of two hundred of these simple students of the Scriptures, principally mechanics and farm-laborers, brought before him as heretics.<sup>1</sup> They knew nothing of the dialectics of the schoolmen, but they had abundance of good, hard, English common sense. They could see and appreciate the difference between the religion that was preached by the fishermen of Galilee, and that which was practiced by the monks of their own time. "Talk about changing the bread and wine into the flesh and blood of the Creator of the world," say they; "let us put a mouse into the pyx, and we shall see whether it be the flesh of the Son of God." One of them was audacious enough to try the experiment, and Longland had him burnt for it.<sup>2</sup>

Thus for a hundred years the doctrines of Wiclif made their way among the common people. There was no great prophet to rise up and fill his place in the Church, and so make his reform conspicuous in England. Hus was his real successor, and he was away in Bohemia. His real successor in his own country was the Bible which he had left behind him; and the book was a silent preacher, that could not be summoned before bishops and councils; that could not be efficiently tried, and condemned, and put out of the way; that did its work, upon the whole, far better

<sup>1</sup> Demaus, *Life of Latimer*, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*, p. 66.

than a living preacher, and where it most needed to be done, in the great heart of the commonalty. It leavened the lower and middle classes, and so grandly prepared the way for the coming of another prophet of the living voice, when the hour should strike for reform to be made prominent again as a movement in the church and the state.

And now we must note one of those strange coincidences of history which more than hint at the operation of a divine plan and purpose underneath all human movements, which, let the passions of men play as they will, are sure to bring about the intent of God. We remarked in the last lecture that the work of Savonarola in Italy had no visible connection with any great reformatory movement either precedent or subsequent to itself; that it was islanded, so to speak, in the sea of history. And that is true. But even as an island often has an invisible connection with the neighboring continent, in some subaqueous reef, or some shoal or spit of sand or rocks, which is only to be detected by the plummet, so the work of Savonarola had a real though invisible connection with that of Latimer and the great Reformation of the English Church in the times of Henry VIII. and Edward VI. That great free movement of students from one university to another, of which I have spoken so often, carried some influences, in a quiet but most effective way, from Italy even into England. The enthusiasm for the new learning, which Lorenzo the Magnificent had done so much to foster, had drawn to Florence several Oxford students. There was Thomas Linacre, who was a tutor to Lorenzo's own children; John Colet, who afterwards became Dean of St. Paul's in London, and founded the famous St. Paul's

school, and was biblical lecturer at Oxford; William Grocyn, divinity professor in Exeter College, who taught Greek to Erasmus and Sir Thomas More; and William Lilly, who was the first to teach Greek in the city of London. These men came back to England from Florence, bringing not only the revival of learning from the Medicean court, but a revival of spiritual religion in their own souls from the fiery preaching of the Prior of San Marco. The Reformation thus strikes its roots in the high places of the Church, in the halls and colleges, in lecture-rooms and professors' chairs. It bids fair now to become confluent with the spirit that is abroad among the common people. John Colet is especially to be noted among these men. He stands first in this hidden line of apostolic succession, next to Savonarola. The monk of San Marco left behind him no better work than the conversion of this young Englishman. He was son of a lord mayor of London, born to fortune, and, better, destined to perpetual influence for good. He seemed to see, almost with the eyes of Savonarola himself, the wickedness that was in high places. "Unless there could be a reform of the clergy, from the Pope at the head down to the monks and the clergymen, he saw no chance of saving the Church. 'Oh, Jesu Christ,' he says, 'wash for us, not our feet only, but also our hands and our head! Otherwise our disordered church cannot be far from death.'"<sup>1</sup>

The great name of John Colet deserves something more than the mere passing notice which I can give it here. He deserves honor, especially in these times of ours, as having fought, amid circumstances immeasurably more trying and oppressive, the same battle

<sup>1</sup> Seebohm, *Protestant Revolution*, pp. 77, 78.



which is now being waged under obloquy, against the vicious principles and methods of scholasticism. The system of the schoolmen claimed to embrace universal knowledge. The sceptre which it extended over the entire field, indiscriminately over the domain of natural science, and of philosophy, and of theology, was a rigid instrument, composed in part, of the old laws of earlier logicians, and in part, of isolated texts of Scripture. To this instrument, which was at once sceptre and foot-rule, every new hypothesis in science, every new suggestion in the way of interpretation, must be brought, and judged by its agreement or disagreement therewith. Investigation was smothered and facts suppressed. From this dogmatism Colet revolted with all his soul. The new learning, which had opened to him the Greek Testament, had brought him face to face with the fresh facts of the gospel story and with the suggestive letters of the apostles; he roamed through them as through a garden fragrant with the morning dews, and was filled with distaste for the *hortus siccus* of dried and labeled specimens which had been cut from their natural stocks and pressed and deodorized in the musty pigeon-holes of the system-makers. He was the first among English reformers to resist the traditional belief in the *verbal* inspiration of the whole Bible, — perhaps I should say in the inspiration of the Bible at all, — and to regard it rather as the *production of inspired men*. One of those vital distinctions which lay at the heart of the new theology of that day, and which is being emphasized afresh in these days of ours. If the Bible is to be called an *inspired book*, then, logically, it may be used as an arsenal of proof-texts for any purpose whatever. If it is a story of events and experi-

ences, of varying human moods and feelings, of divine self-disclosures in providence and history, which men were authorized and empowered by an indwelling and illumining Spirit to record, then it is quite a different thing, and cannot be so used without traversing its intent.

Doubtless one may take a beautiful tree, glorious for its wealth of leaf and blossom and fruitage, and hew it branch from trunk, and cut it up into lengths to suit his own convenience, and manufacture it into boxes and barrels to hold his merchandise, cribs for his corn, and pens for his cattle; but let him not then apply the adjective *divine* to his manufacture, nor call upon his neighbors to worship his handiwork, though knocked together out of heaven-provided materials. It is not divine, but very human, if indeed it be not inhuman. We will not worship the image which Nebuchadnezzar has set up, though God have furnished the gold. And this was John Colet's new departure. For this he was charged with making infidels, by men whose unreasoning belief in the verbal inspiration of the book had "led men blindfold into a condition of mind in which they practically ignored the Scriptures altogether."

Now mark the succession of influence. See how the light is passed from hand to hand, "the light of the glorious gospel of the blessed God." Under the influence of this apostolic man, John Colet, there comes a poor Dutch student, who, eager for the new learning, but too poor to go to Italy, works his way over to England, where, he has heard, they can teach him Greek. John Colet can teach him Greek, and something more. The pupil, who soon outstrips his master, is the afterwards famous Erasmus of Rotterdam; the man who

did more than any other of his age, not even excepting Luther himself, to satirize the monkish ignorance and ecclesiastical follies that were around him. He gives another mighty influence to the Reformation among the scholars, by editing the Greek Testament with a Latin translation. The book becomes the talk of the universities. It opens a new world to men who have become weary of the chaff of the schoolmen. They are brought for the first time into quickening contact with the word of God. That Greek Testament of Erasmus is quietly doing among the scholars just what Wiclif's English Testament has been doing for a hundred years among the common people. It will strike some mighty practical mind very soon that will use it in a practical way. It falls into the hands of a poor scholar, Thomas Bilney by name, who has been trying to get ease for his conscience by fastings and vigils, by buying masses and indulgences, and who wonders if there be any clear light at all to which he can betake himself. As he opens the book his eye lights upon those words of St. Paul, so familiar to us as to seem trite, but fresh and new to him as sunshine to one who has lived through an Arctic night: "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "This one sentence," he says, "through the power of God working on my heart, in a manner at that time unknown to me, rejoiced my soul, then deeply wounded by a sight and sense of my sins, and almost in the depths of despair, so that I felt an inward comfort and quietness which I cannot describe; but it caused my broken heart to rejoice."<sup>1</sup> While Bilney

<sup>1</sup> Tulloch, *Leaders of Reformation*, p. 286; Demaus, *Life of Latimer*, p. 26.

was at Cambridge, a young Englishman was there passing through the divinity schools, an ardent lover of the Church, zealous for its constitution and order, hating the new opinions that are rife, indignant at the attacks that are being made on all sides against the vices of its priesthood, denouncing upon every occasion the use of the Scriptures by the people, holding to the strictest regimen of penance and confession. He is a recognized power among the partisans of the Church ; a hot papist ; in fact, so prominent for his high and zealous ecclesiasticism, that the university has made him the official cross-bearer, to carry the great silver cross of the university in its parades and processions ; and when he comes to take his degree as Bachelor in Divinity, he makes a violent oration against Philip Melancthon. Bilney admires the spirit of the man, and withal discovers from certain passages of his oration that he is ill at ease, and needs to know what he himself has experienced. He seeks him out, goes to his study, begs him to hear his confession. They are both children of the one Church, and Bilney makes his confession. He tells the touching story of his own spiritual conflict. He has done penance. He has paid for masses and absolutions. He has diligently applied himself to all the soul remedies which the young divine had recommended in his oration. He has fasted and wept and prayed, till he was more dead than alive. At last he has read that book which the Church has forbidden to be used by the people, and found peace in the knowledge of God's free love in the gift of his Son. And now, he asks, must I abandon my peace, and go back to my penance and despair ? The frank and simple story of Bilney's spiritual conflicts revealed to the young priest, as he afterwards said, more of himself than he

ever knew before. It was a revelation to him, of a truth and a life of which he had been profoundly ignorant; of a peace and a health for which he too had longed, but which he had never found. He sought and found it now. The young priest was Hugh Latimer. I have thus far given you his spiritual genealogy: Savonarola converted John Colet, John Colet converted the great Erasmus, Erasmus converted Thomas Bilney, and Thomas Bilney converted Hugh Latimer.<sup>1</sup>

The little that can be said of Latimer's early years is to be gathered mainly from his own discourses in later life. The date of his birth is uncertain, but it could not have been far from the year 1484, which marks the close of a century from the death of Wiclif. His father was a well-to-do yeoman of Leicestershire, of whom all that we know Latimer himself has told us, in a sermon preached before the young king, Edward VI. "My father had a farm of three or four pounds by year at the uttermost; and hereupon he tilled so much as kept half a dozen men. He had walk for a hundred sheep, and my mother milked thirty kine. He was able, and did find the king a harness, with himself and his horse. I can remember that I buckled his harness when he went unto Blackheath field. He kept me to school, or else I had not been able to have preached before the king's majesty now. He married my sisters with five pound or twenty nobles apiece; so that he brought them up in

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the word "converted" should not be pressed in its conventional sense in all these cases, but this is the *underground wire* through which the impulse from Florence was conveyed to the universities of Cambridge and Oxford, and ultimately to the British throne.

godliness and the fear of God. He kept hospitality for his poor neighbors ; and some alms he gave to the poor." And in another sermon he says : " My father was as diligent to teach me to shoot as to learn me any other thing, and so I think other men did their children : he taught me how to draw, how to lay my body in my bow, and not to draw with strength of arms as other nations do, but with strength of the body. I had my bows bought me according to my age and strength : as I increased in them so my bows were made bigger and bigger ; for men shall never shoot well except they be brought up in it ; it is a goodly art, a wholesome kind of exercise, and much commended in physic."

It is only a glimpse that we get into that old English country home of four hundred years ago, but it is a glimpse that reveals a good deal. There is piety towards God, sound parental training, loyalty to king and country, compassion towards the poor, thrift and honesty, a care for physical health, a liking for domestic toil and rural sports, a fine, breezy, wholesome atmosphere about the whole picture, something which makes us glad and thankful while we read it in Latimer's homely words, that we ourselves have sprung from just such cradles as this old Leicestershire farmhouse. And as one reads the sermons of the reformer's later years, in the light of these few words of description, in which, as he himself says, he always calls a spade a spade, we feel the same wholesome farm-house atmosphere in his rough but manly speech, his shrewdness of observation, his homely figures, his utter freedom from cant on one side and from scholasticism on the other, and his invariable directness in dealing with whatever matter he has in hand.

He passed to the University of Cambridge in 1506, and graduated successively Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts, and Bachelor of Divinity. It was a singular recognition of these peculiar powers, by virtue of which he was afterwards to wield so great an influence, that while he was yet an undergraduate in Divinity he was appointed one of twelve preachers, licensed, by a peculiar privilege of the University of Cambridge, to officiate in any part of England. Those were stirring times, in the world of thought and letters, during which Latimer was in residence at Cambridge, but the stir seems hardly to have affected him till the very close of his university career. Just as one would expect from what he himself has disclosed of his parentage and early years at home, Latimer is the typical Englishman; averse to change, impatient of novelties, loving to do everything just as it has been done from time immemorial. Had the Sharp's rifle been invented in that day, he would still have cleaved to the good old yewen-bow which his father taught him how to handle. Erasmus was then in Cambridge awakening the greatest enthusiasm in his teaching of Greek; but the good old Anglo-Saxon and a little Latin were enough for Latimer. No good was to come out of these new-fangled notions. Greek was the language of heresy. George Stafford was reading divinity lectures and expounding the Old Testament and the New. But the good old school-doctors, St. Anselm and St. Thomas Aquinas, pure fountains of orthodoxy, honored by the Church for centuries, had long ago told, if not all that could be learned from the Scriptures, at least all that any one ought to want to know. He was an obstructive of the worst type. No new departure for him! What a valuable man he would

have been to the hyper-Calvinists of to-day, if his birth could only have been delayed for four hundred years! And one other "if," — if he could not have been softened and converted. But even he was convertible when the warm tides of Bilney's piety poured themselves around his stubborn soul. He was thoroughly honest, as obstructives generally are. He had implicit confidence in the Church as already constituted. And believing as he did, that most perilous heresy was spreading among the students, he was eager, even to indignation, against the promoters of the new doctrines. "Perceiving the youth of the university inclined to the reading of the Scriptures, and leaving off the school-doctors, he came amongst the youth, gathered together of daily custom to their disputations; and then most eloquently made to them an oration, dissuading them from this new-fangled kind of study of the Scriptures, and vehemently persuaded them to the study of the school-authors."<sup>1</sup>

I have told you of his conversion at the hands of Thomas Bilney. And when that took place, and the simplicity of the gospel once possessed him, the same temper which made him so enthusiastic a supporter of the rights and dogmas of the Church made him an equally zealous advocate of religious and ecclesiastical reform. From the first to the last, however, his preaching was exceedingly simple and practical, and comparatively undoctinal. He spoke ever of the real interests and duties of the Christian life. He addressed the hearts and consciences of men, and so could be understood of all, whether of great intellect or little. He had adopted no new creed, he had simply got a new vision of Christ. He wished for no

<sup>1</sup> *Latimer's Remains*, quoted by Demaus, p. 30.



new form of worship, he would have men to be simply true and honest in the forms they already had. He was still a priest in the Church in which he had been baptized and ordained, and expected to live and die in its communion. But he had discovered that fastings and penance and supplication of saints did not give peace to the soul; that peace had been already procured by Christ, and full atonement made by Him; that all the works of man's invention, — going on pilgrimages, offering candles to the shrines of saints, creeping to a cross, — were not the good works of a Christian life; that they procured nothing and evidenced nothing; but that a life of holiness, in obedience to God, visiting the sick, relieving the poor, teaching the ignorant for the love of Christ, and leading men to repentance, was the true life for a Christian to lead. All this he now began to preach, mightily and everywhere, not only within the precincts of the university, one of whose preachers he was, but all about the country. He would even go into lazar-houses and hospitals to preach Christ, to jails and prisons, and other places where outcasts were gathered for whom no man cared. And his homely sense, and bright humor, and overflowing goodness, and conscientious appeals made him welcome alike in the pest-house and in the University Church of St. Mary's. Such a man must soon emerge in an horizon of broader observation. He must step into the field of history.

The Bishop of Ely hears of the stir at Cambridge caused by the new learning of the schools and the new preaching in the pulpits, and thinks it time to look after that quarter of his diocese. Without announcement, he drops into St. Mary's one day while Latimer is preaching, to judge for himself whether certain

charges are true. The preacher calmly waits till the bishop and his attendants are seated, and then, remarking that a new audience, especially of such a rank, deserves a new theme, he gives out a new text: "Christ being come, an High Priest of good things to come," etc. (Heb. ix. 11), and draws out the theme, "Jesus Christ the true pattern of a Christian bishop." In showing what a true bishop is, he inevitably showed what the present bishop was not. The contrast was painful, no doubt. At any rate, the bishop forbade him to preach any more in any of the churches of Cambridge. There was one place, however, just at hand which was exempt from the bishop's jurisdiction, the priory church of the Augustines. And the prior, being in sympathy with Latimer, gave him the free use of his pulpit, so that there was no cessation of his preaching or his influence. But the man must be stopped, if possible, and so an appeal is made to the great Cardinal Wolsey, who cites Latimer to appear before him for examination. And now his old admiration for the schoolmen stands him in good stead. The cardinal finds him thoroughly posted in Duns and Aquinas; knows far more about them, it appears, than his accusers. Such a man surely is not very deeply infected with the new heresies. He is a thorough scholastic, and fairly captures the great cardinal. "But tell me, Master Latimer, why the Bishop of Ely misliketh thy proceedings; tell me the truth." Latimer then, in his honest, straightforward way, tells how he preached before him on Christ as the pattern of a Christian bishop, and gives the text and the substance of the sermon. "And did you preach before him no other doctrine than this?" "No, surely," said Latimer. Then said the cardinal, "If the Bishop

of Ely cannot abide such doctrine, you shall have *my* license, and shall preach it unto his beard, let him say what he will." And so Latimer was discharged, with the cardinal's license henceforth to preach not only in Cambridge, but through all England. It makes us think more kindly of the great archbishop, if possible, than even Shakespeare's touching picture of his humiliation, to know that one of his later official acts was thus put forth in defense of a brother Englishman who had sprung from a similar rank to that of his own origin, and who had been unjustly accused in the honest performance of his Christian duty.

From this time Latimer stands out as a prominent figure in English history, his name associated with several others of whom we always think in connection with him, notably those of Thomas Cranmer and Nicolas Ridley. From these men, however, he differed as much in the aspects of his work as in the elements of his personal character. Ridley, who was afterwards burned with him, was more of a scholar, and did his work mainly among scholars. Cranmer, though he became the highest prelate in England, was more noted for the political aspect of his career. Latimer, in his person and in his work, furnished a connection between the common people and the higher classes. In him the two streams of reformation, that among the commonalty and that in the court, became confluent. He blended the two movements and made them one. He took up the Wiclifian influence and welded it with the work of Henry VIII. as perhaps no other person could have done. Like Savonarola, he laid his hand upon the extremes of society and brought the two together, and that too, like the Florentine, mainly by the force of his preaching. He lived in three

marked reigns. That we may more succinctly gather up his work, we shall look at him in his relations to the King Henry VIII., as preacher to Edward VI., and as the victim of Bloody Mary.

The great cardinal (Wolsey) did not live long enough to know fully what would be the results of that protection which he had so generously extended to Latimer. We need not derogate from that generosity by supposing what his conduct would have been had he lived and continued in power. Let us give him full credit for what he did with good intent. Just after Wolsey's fall, in 1529, Henry VIII., intent upon his divorce from Queen Katherine, called upon the universities of England and the continent to decide the question whether or no marriage with a deceased brother's wife were contrary to the law of God and of nature, and Latimer was one of the twelve men appointed by his own university of Cambridge to voice its opinion. That decision was given early in the following spring, and was favorable to the wishes of the king. We cannot doubt that, whatever motives swayed that commission on one side and on the other, Latimer was perfectly honest in his opinion that the king's marriage had been immoral and illegal. We cannot believe that he was looking to any consequences ulterior to an impartial decision of the question upon grounds of morality and religion alone. He would have decided in the same way had it been proposed to him by the humblest subject of the realm. Nor had he any reason to suppose that the king would know his personal sentiment in a commission whose opinions would undoubtedly be divided. But there was a royal emissary in Cambridge while the debate was going on, who discovered Latimer's position and reported it to

the king. And the king, knowing his great repute as a preacher, and curious to hear the man whose eloquence had made such a sensation in Cambridge, forthwith summoned him to preach before the court the next Sunday. To any ordinary man such a summons would be a great event. Indeed, extraordinary ambition might regard it as the culmination of life's honors. But this son of a yeoman, this simple-hearted, plain-spoken man of the common people, with his unkempt language and farmer-like ways, takes his first appearance at court as a part of the divine ordering of life, apparently going to Windsor as he would go to some little chapel in the outskirts of Cambridge, and with no different motive, to preach his new-found gospel. How utterly ingenuous and unselfish he is in the whole matter appears at once. When the king comes and speaks to him after the sermon, he falls on his knees and begs that his majesty will pardon a poor woman who is lying under sentence of death in Cambridge jail. He and Bilney have visited her, and they are persuaded of her innocence. And Latimer goes back to Cambridge elated and thankful, not that he has preached before the court, and his majesty was pleased to commend his discourse, but that he carries the poor ignorant woman's pardon safe in his pocket. Almost immediately upon his return to Cambridge, the king summons another commission; this time to consult concerning the prohibition of religious books which are circulating through the kingdom, to examine their contents and decide what are erroneous and seditious, and what are good and fruitful. The action is aimed more immediately at the circulation of the Scriptures in English. Again Latimer is appointed upon this commission. But the majority are opposed

to him, and they vote for a wholesale and sweeping condemnation, and a royal proclamation immediately follows confirming their action. But Latimer is not the man to be content with a simple protest before his fellows. He sits down, and writes a letter to the king himself in favor of the free circulation of the Scriptures in the English tongue. Whether we consider the man who wrote it, the age in which it was written, the haughty and imperious monarch to whom it was addressed, or its style and contents, there is nothing grander in the whole realm of literature. These are its closing words: "Wherefore, gracious king, remember yourself: have pity upon your soul: and think that the day is even at hand when you shall give an account of your office, and of the blood that hath been shed by your sword. In the which day that your grace may stand steadfastly, and not be ashamed, but be clear and ready in your reckoning, and to have (as they say) your *quietus est* sealed with the blood of our Saviour Christ, which only serveth at that day, is my daily prayer to Him that suffered death for our sins, which also prayeth to his Father for grace to us continually, to whom be all honor and praise forever! Amen! The Spirit of God preserve your grace!"

This was a man to stand before kings!

The immediate object of the letter was not gained. But it speaks a world for the heroism and grandeur of Latimer's character, and much also for Henry's magnanimity, that he honored the man who dared to write it, by making him almost immediately one of the royal chaplains.

He came to reside at court. Anne Boleyn was queen now, and he fell into her good graces, which fact served him well while her star was in the ascend-

ant. But life here was not to his liking, with his simple tastes and homely mode of life, and the king soon appointed him rector of the country parish of Kington, in Wiltshire. And here again he was happy, going about among the sick and poor, talking with farmers and ploughmen, doing good in all sorts of ways, — a good pastor to a loving people, whose descendants, to this day, are proud of the memory of good Master Latimer. But how impossible to bottle up such a man in an obscure country parish! He must preach the blessed gospel; and so, taking advantage of his old Cambridge license to preach anywhere in England, he not only fills his own pulpit, but goes out on every side, to Bristol, to London, to Kent. And so inevitably he comes into repeated conflict with the old papistical spirit. He exposes the frauds of relics and images. He enlightens the poor people as to the mummeries and shams by which their souls are imposed upon, and their pockets robbed of their wages; he turns them away from saints to the Saviour. We may say that he might better have confined himself to the work of his parish. But he felt that England was his parish, and the Word of God was as fire shut up in his bones. Preaching in London, he falls under the displeasure of the bishop of that diocese, who is now engaged with Sir Thomas More in the violent suppression of heresy, who summons him to answer for preaching in his territory without express permission. This leads to long persecution, and finally to his imprisonment, and even to his excommunication. His appeal to the king at length procures his release.

Cromwell soon after this became chancellor in the place of Sir Thomas More, and Cranmer was made about the same time Archbishop of Canterbury. Both

knew and appreciated Latimer, and through their friendship, aided perhaps by the influence of Anne Boleyn, Latimer is suddenly lifted out of the troubles in which he was involved, by being made Bishop of Worcester. One would hardly think it consonant with the tastes and habits of the man. But it raised him above the reach of petty persecution for the time, and enlarged in some ways the scope of his influence. His work as bishop he made simply that of pastor in a larger parish. Throughout that diocese, at least, he could teach the pure gospel unhindered, and see that his rectors and curates preached it. He makes his visitations to his churches and clergy truly pastoral. He brings to the administration of his diocese his old yeoman-like shrewdness and common sense. He tells his clergy that they must reside on their livings; he will have them spend their time in reading the Scriptures and setting a good example. The people must not be undertaking pilgrimages; they will please God better by the true exercise of their bodily labor, providing for their families; it will be more profitable for their soul's health to bestow upon the poor what they are wont to bestow on images. Fathers and masters must teach their children and servants the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments in the mother tongue, and curates must repeat them in their sermons till all are familiar with them. Moreover all are to be brought up to work, that begging may not be the scandal of the nation. Such was the good bishop's reformatory work.

And he meant that his true religion and Anglo-Saxon sense should strike up and down through all those grades of society which it was a bishop's privilege to reach. The king should have no more immu-



nity than the ploughboy. And so one New Year's Day, when the bishops and nobles were accustomed to send gifts to the king, jewels and presents of gold and silver, good Latimer sends up his gift among them, or rather himself puts it into the king's own hand, a New Testament with the leaf turned down to the text, "Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." A wonder of wonders that bluff and fiery King Hal did not "off with his head."

He is the same faithful, outspoken, honest friend to God, and purity, and justice, and truth, as a bishop, that he was as a village pastor. When he takes his seat in Parliament for the first time as a peer of the realm, and the question is up on the disestablishment of the monasteries, he opposes with all his might their perversion to secular uses. Could Latimer have had his way in the sixteenth century, England would not now have been cursed so heavily as she is, by the cries of the poor and the clamors of the communist. Many a lordly manor and many a noble hall, which has come down to its present owners, not as the righteous and legitimate reward of industry and honest toil, but as the gift of favoritism to some worthless ancestor, would now be yielding its revenues to widespread and popular needs. He remonstrates against religious houses which had been endowed for the relief of the poor, being turned into king's stables. He entreats Cromwell to spare the abbey of Great Malvern, "not for monkery, God forbid, but to maintain preaching, teaching, study, with praying and good works and true hospitality."

On June 9, 1536, is held the first Protestant Convocation of the Church of England, and Latimer is appointed to preach the opening sermon. There he is

the same protesting spirit against clerical abuse. He is a bishop now, and can speak untrammelled. Around him are men who had sought to silence him, who had sought his life. He takes for his text the Parable of the Unjust Steward. Savonarola might have been more fiery, he could not have been more incisive or more practical ; humor, scorn, parable, keen wit, indignation, and yet abounding kindness of heart which Latimer never forgot, sent that sermon home to the hearts and consciences of the bishops, and to the heart of all England. It was fruitful of beneficent changes, which I cannot dwell upon.

Latimer's work as bishop, however, was now about finished. The famous act of the Six Articles concerning the real presence, vows of chastity, communion in both kinds, private masses, celibacy of the clergy, and auricular confession, was brought forward in Parliament by the popish party, was passed, and enforced by a bill of penalties of the most sanguinary character. Upon which Latimer resigned his episcopate. He came home from the House of Parliament, and threw off his episcopal robes, saying, as he did so, that he thought he was lighter than he had ever found himself before. He was now getting old and weary. His spirit was neither crushed nor quenched, but he longed for rest. But he was not suffered to remain in quiet. He was too dangerous a spirit to be allowed his freedom. He was no longer the Lord Bishop of Worcester, but plain Hugh Latimer again. As such he was amenable to episcopal authority upon the slightest pretense. He was seized and imprisoned upon the accusation that he had spoken against the Six Articles, and was kept a prisoner until the death of Henry in 1547.

Happy days came again for the old man with the accession of Edward VI., the godly boy, the Josiah of the English throne. It is useless to speculate upon what Edward might have been had his life been prolonged to manhood. Never was son while a boy more unlike his father. By the general pardon, proclaimed as usual upon the day of the king's coronation, Latimer was set free, and at once taken into high favor. He was even urged to resume his bishopric. But he did not want again to be immersed in public affairs. He was old and weary. He was content, as he humorously expressed it, to be a *quondam*, thanking God that he had come to his quondamship by honest means. But he did not mean to rust out. He could and would preach. And men would hear him. The great English heart had a warm place for old Master Latimer. He never opened his mouth but men of every rank crowded about to listen. When he preached, as he often did, before the boy-king, it was necessary to erect a pulpit in the king's garden, so that the multitudes could be accommodated. He preached once in St. Margaret's, Westminster, and all the pews were broken in pieces, so great was the throng. His good friend, Archbishop Cranmer, would have him come and live with him at Lambeth. And the two old men, who had only one great cause at heart, read and studied and wrote together, and were happy. Some of the beautiful homilies of the Church of England are the fruit of those Indian summer days. It is a fine picture that history gives of old white-headed Latimer and grave and gentle Cranmer dwelling together in the evening of life, among the gray towers of Lambeth palace, worshiping together in its lovely chapel, reading in its library, walking in

its gardens, praying together for their young king, and for the good work which is going on in their beloved Church of England. It is a gracious touch which Latimer himself adds to the picture, in one of his quaint sermons. "I am no sooner in the garden," says he, "and have read awhile but by and by cometh there some one or other knocking at the gate. Anon cometh my man, and saith, 'Sir, there is one at the gate that would speak with you.' When I come there, then is it some one or other poor body that desireth me that I will speak that his matter may be heard." Then turning to the Lord Protector,<sup>1</sup> who was present, he entreated him, for the love of God, to see justice promptly administered, and not provoke divine vengeance by neglecting the suits of the poor.

Alas! that such lovely autumn days should be so soon followed by the winter and the storm.

With the early death of Edward, and the accession of Mary, all this was changed. The reactionary party came into power. Mary, indignant at Cranmer's position in relation to the matter of the succession, when Edward died, visited her wrath without measure upon him, and all who had concurred with him. Latimer had left Lambeth and retired into the country. But he was speedily summoned to London and immured in the Tower. He went willingly and joyfully; passing through Smithfield he said, "This place hath a great while longed for me." After lying all winter in the Tower without any fire, about even this he could be humorous, telling his persecutors that the cold would cheat the fire, if they did not look better after him. He was carried to Oxford, along with Cranmer

<sup>1</sup> Somerset.

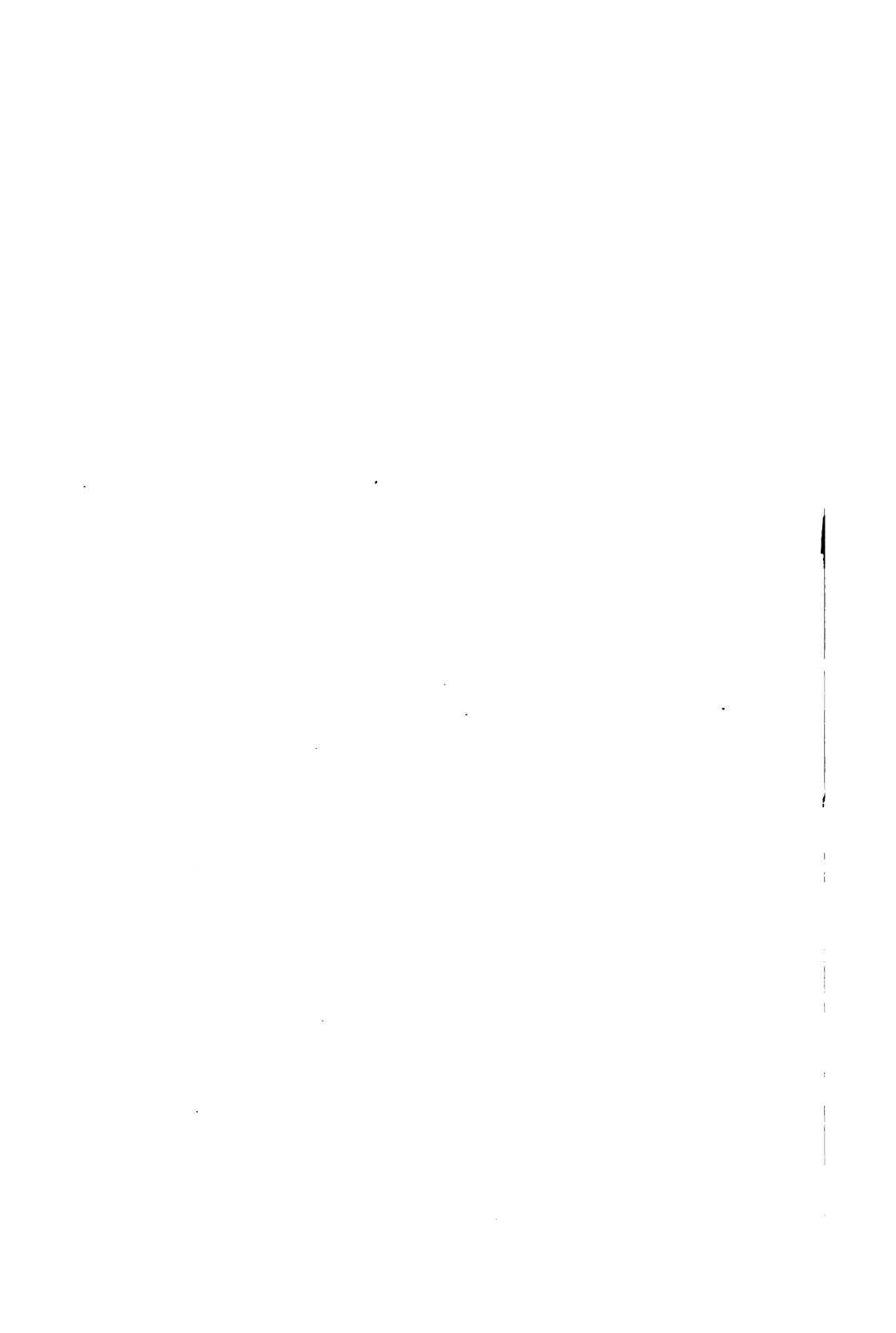
and Ridley, to dispute with certain commissioners upon the doctrine of the mass. The whole affair was a farce, enacted with the purpose of procuring a pretext for their condemnation. Latimer declines to dispute. He is an old man, and not so quick at his Latin as he once was. He has been all winter in prison without any books. He can tell them simply what he believes, but he does not believe in their doctrine of the mass. For more than a year the farce is unaccountably prolonged. The old man is worn out with his long imprisonment. "You look for learning at my hand, which have gone so long to the school of oblivion, making the bare walls my library; keeping me so long in prison without book or pen or ink; and now you let me loose to come and answer to articles. You deal with me as though two were appointed to fight for life and death, and over night one, through friends and favor, is cherished and hath good counsel how to encounter his enemy; the other, for envy or lack of friends, all the whole night is set in the stocks. In the morning, when they shall meet, the one is in strength and lively, the other is stark of his limbs and almost dead for feebleness. Think you that to run through this man with a spear is not a goodly victory?"

The end is what was intended. Latimer and Ridley were condemned, and led forth to the fire. It is superfluous to tell how joyfully they went, as if to a sweet night's rest after a weary day, or to repeat that beautiful good-night of old Master Latimer, "Be of good cheer, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall, this day, light such a candle, by God's grace, in England as I trust shall never be put out."

It never has been; from that candle has been

lighted the cheer and brightness, the faith and purity,  
the joy and hope of English-speaking homes in all the  
world.

“Bodies fall by wild sword-law ;  
But who would force the soul tilts with a straw  
Against a champion cased in adamant.”



VI.

CRANMER.

A. D. 1489-1556.

VICTORY sickens, ignorant where to rest!

WORDSWORTH, *Eccl. Sonnets*, part II., xxxii.





## VI.

### CRANMER.

A. D. 1489-1556.

THE subject of the present chapter affords a strong contrast, at many points, both of character and conduct, to the career which has just engaged our attention. Latimer was admirable, from first to last, for his strong simplicity. Cranmer, though he may not be righteously charged with duplicity, was nevertheless a strange paradox of strength and weakness. Latimer never feared the face of man. Cranmer, though the word coward would be too strong to apply to him, was exceedingly politic. There was a well-defined line of personal safety which he was careful to never overstep. Familiar as he was, with the familiarity of a favorite, he would never have ventured to put a Testament, with that significantly folded leaf, into the hand of Henry. Bishop Hooper said of him, in a letter to the Swiss reformer, Bullinger, that he was "too fearful about what might come to him." It is quite probable, however, that a man of less caution would have accomplished less in the positions which Cranmer was called to fill. His faults, and they were grave ones, were seldom those of commission, but rather of infirmity, — a weak yielding to others, instead of being true to the convictions of his own conscience. He is, historically, the most prominent figure

among the divines and statesmen of the English Reformation. He did more than any other man, save Henry himself, to give shape to the movement, and his mark is scored more deeply than that of any other man to-day in the constitution and services of the English Church. That that Church, in its separation from the Church of Rome, did not become simply another papacy, is due to him. Henry's will was good enough to make it so, and the strength of the episcopate would have been largely with him. It is common enough to hear the statement that the Reformation in England was owing to the king's determination to gratify, at all hazards, his unlawful passions. But that is not true. The desire to divorce Katherine and to wed Anne furnished only an occasion, not a cause. After this object had been accomplished, Henry thought, just as he had thought before, that the papal doctrines were in nowise at fault. He had written a book against Luther and the new doctrines that were spreading in Germany, — a book full of vigor and virulence. And he hated them as much as ever. Indeed, he was at heart a papist to the end of his life. The only difference was that he proposed to be pope in his own dominions. Independence, not reformation, was all that he wanted. And it is owing, for the most part, to Cranmer that the Church got anything more. He was the fellow, in early years, of Latimer and Bilney, and loved the truth that they loved, drew it pure from the same fountains, and finally became as it were the official head of the movement which they conducted on humbler levels. For this he had, as he needed, more *finesse* than they; he lacked somewhat of that which they had in abundance, toughness of moral fibre.

It is probable that Cranmer was born to a somewhat softer cradle than Latimer. He belonged to that class of English people that were fond, some four hundred years ago, of boasting that their ancestors "came over with the Conqueror;" a class which has gained more virtues from the soil and the people their ancestors conquered than were brought to the conquest. His mother, as well as his father, was of an ancient family, and so it is probable that both his birth and his domestic training were blessed with some advantages, and cumbered with some disadvantages, that Latimer's never knew. He was born at Aslacton, near Nottingham, July 2, 1489. His early nurture was of the hall, and not of the farm-house; of a gentleman, not of a yeoman; and so, unlike Latimer, he was fitted, from the first, for the softness of the court. His physical energies were trained in a different way. He did not learn how to "lay his body in the bow," but was taught to ride and to manage a mettlesome horse, became expert in hunting and hawking, which were the accomplishments of the gentle-born at that day. It was then, as it is now: the farmer's boy learns to swing the axe and guide the plough; the rich man's son to ride gracefully and play polo at Newport. And mental and moral characteristics are apt to diverge in similar lines. Latimer always calls a spade a spade. Cranmer, if he knows what the implement is at all, gives it some euphuistic name. It is doubtful, however, if the mental discipline to which Latimer was subjected was equal to that which was bestowed upon Cranmer. The father of the latter, according to a chronicle of the time, "did sett hym to scole with a mervellous

severe and cruell scolemaster.”<sup>1</sup> And just as men of that day meant fifteen times as much as we do when they spoke of pounds, shillings, and pence, so it is with these terms of severity and cruelty. The severities of our school-rooms would have been mere pleasantries to the pedagogue of Cranmer’s boyhood. He was restrained by no tender-hearted school-committee in the administration of school-room justice, but plied the birch in autocratic freedom. Nicholas Udall, the famous schoolmaster of Eton in Cranmer’s time, has been handed down in the verses of Thomas Tusser, one of his pupils, who could not forget or forgive the smart inflicted by his master : —

“From Paul’s I went,  
To Eton sent,  
To learn straightways  
The Latin phrase.  
Where fifty-three  
Stripes given to me  
At once I had;  
For fault but small,  
Or none at all,  
It came to pass  
Thus beat I was.  
See, Udall, see,  
The mercy of thee  
To me, poor lad.”

And Cranmer himself commented in after years even more seriously upon the severities of his own school-master. “His tyranny towards youthe was suche, that, as he thoughte, the saide scolemaster so appalled, dulled, and daunted the tender and fyne wittes of his scolers, that thei comonlie more hated

<sup>1</sup> *Anecdotes of Archbishop Cranmer, by Ralph Morice, his Secretary.* Camden Society’s Publications.

and abhorred good literature than favored or inbraced the same; whose memories were also thereby so mutilated and wounded that for his parte he lost moche of that benefitt of memory and audacitie in his youthe that by nature was given unto hym, whiche he could never recover."<sup>1</sup>

But however much Cranmer may have suffered in his own estimation under the severity of this early discipline, it did not kill his love of learning. He was, from his boyhood to the end of his life, the enthusiastic scholar; the patient, investigating, and thorough student; loving knowledge for itself, and never thinking of it as a ladder by which he might climb into eminence. He is a fine illustration of the fact that Fame seeks the man who never thinks of seeking for her, but who is intent upon learning from the pure delight which he has in letters. When Cardinal Wolsey founded his new college at Oxford, and sent to Cambridge for a company of its foremost scholars to be fellows of the new institution, Cranmer was solicited to be of the number. And it is evidence of his entire freedom from anything like selfish ambition, that neither the fine salary offered, nor the avenues to promotion opened before him by the friendship of the great cardinal, were sufficient to tempt him away from his humble place as the scholar of Jesus College, in Cambridge.

He became a student in this college in 1503, at fourteen years of age, his father having died a little before. From that time until he was twenty-two, he gave himself unweariedly, and with great success, to the usual scholastic studies. I have already described

<sup>1</sup> *Anecdotes and Character of Archbishop Cranmer, by Ralph Morice, his Secretary.*

the intellectual and spiritual ferment which at this time was taking place at Cambridge. With the open and ingenuous mind of the true scholar, Cranmer was always ready to welcome light from any quarter. He never seems to have passed through any such sudden and almost violent transition as Latimer did. He seized upon the new learning as enthusiastically as he had pursued the old. When Erasmus came to teach Greek he was not afraid of it as Latimer was because it was the language of heresy; the fathers and schoolmen were not sufficient for him, if anything was to be known which they had not taught. And so after he has given eight years to the schoolmen, he gives four or five more to Erasmus and Faber. And then, as the books and doctrines of Luther are being brought over into England, engaging the attention of the learned, and even enlisting the antagonism of King Henry, Cranmer determines to discover their truth or falsehood for himself, and gives three years more to the study of the Bible alone. There is something impressive in this immense prodigality of time. These new questions, and particularly that radical question which is now beginning to agitate the minds not only of theologians but of the common people, whether the authority of the Romish Church or that of the Scriptures should dictate the rule of faith, are not to be settled, as some men think to settle similar questions in these days, by listening to a course of boisterous lectures on one side or the other, or reading a half dozen review articles, or by the intemperate dogmatism of newspaper writers. He must get at the spirit and meaning of the Word of God by calm and open-minded and unwearying study. And what he has demanded of himself he also imposes upon others. He

is a doctor of divinity and has been made examiner in theology to the university. And he demands as the first condition of a certificate to any student, however superior his other acquirements, a competent knowledge of the Bible. To this demand he adheres resolutely, in the face of all the traditions of the university, and in spite of the deep and bitter animosity which the unwonted conditions awaken among the students.

And so it comes to pass that Cranmer is forty years old, a ripe scholar, with a vast mass of erudition at his command, — for he has read slowly, with pen in hand, — making note of everything as he has passed along, probably one of the best furnished men, intellectually, that the University of Cambridge can produce, when, by what seems like a mere accident, he suddenly appears upon the scene of history. Of course, like everybody else, he has been interested in the great national question concerning the divorce of Queen Katherine. He has thought it over in all its aspects. It was not so simple a question as we with our clearer light are apt to think it. But one answer could be given now. But we must put ourselves back into the England of three hundred and fifty years ago. There was, on the one side, a wedded life of more than a score of years, in which Katherine had been to Henry a true and faithful wife, had borne his children, had been known and loved through all England as a true queen, and the marriage had been sanctioned from the first by the authority of the Pope, which all parties had then recognized. But there were grave facts on the other side. There was much at stake beside the “inclinations of the profligate monarch.” These alone might have been and probably were his



prime motives. But his statesmen and people were thinking of something else. The succession to the throne was endangered. The Princess Mary might not live. Or if she did, no queen regnant had so far ever occupied the throne. Whether she lived or died, as custom and law then were, the death of Henry would have been surely followed by insurrection or civil war. And so when the king's passions suggested to him the divorce of the old wife and the wedding of a new one, men of all classes were ready to consider whether the first marriage had been legal, or whether, if contrary to the laws of God and nature, the Pope's dispensation had ever made it really valid. If it had been wrong at the outset, then there was no heir to the throne. And even if the wrong had been made right by a score of years of wedded life, still, according to immemorial custom, there was no heir.<sup>1</sup>

While matters were in this unsettled condition a fearful sickness broke out at Cambridge, and Cranmer, taking two young pupils who were studying with him, retired to the house of a kinsman near Waltham. While he was there the king, who was on a journey, passed the night at Waltham Abbey. Two of his suite were lodged in the house where Cranmer was sojourning, and at the supper-table the one theme came up which was discussed at all the supper-tables of the kingdom. Cranmer casually remarked, that he had not probably looked into the matter so thoroughly as his hearers, but it seemed to him that if the divines of the universities should decide that marriage with a brother's widow is illegal, and if it were proved that Katherine had been married to Prince Arthur, her

<sup>1</sup> See the question discussed at length by Froude, *History*, ch. ii.

marriage to Henry could be declared null and void by the ordinary ecclesiastical courts without any necessity of an appeal to Rome. This entirely innocent remark made its author Archbishop of Canterbury, lifted him from the state of a humble student to that of the first subject of the realm, and brought him finally to the stake. It was reported to Henry, who saw the point in a twinkling, and exclaimed, "Who is this Dr. Cranmer? I must see him. Let him be sent for out of hand. This man, I trow, has got the right sow by the ear." This casual remark of Cranmer had indeed a broader scope than even he dreamed of at the time of its utterance. It logically involved the Reformation in all its length and breadth. If the Bible could be consulted as an authority without need of appeal to the Pope in this single case of temporary interest, then why not in all cases? If its decisions were binding without appeal in such a matter as the divorce of the King of England, then why not in all matters pertaining in any way to the interests of the realm? Cranmer had thus put an end, unwittingly, to his quiet and beloved student life, and was immediately commanded by the king to put his thoughts upon the divorce question into a book. The next three or four years were accordingly spent by him exclusively in the king's business, in writing his book, in going to Rome and Germany at Henry's command, to defend its doctrine at the papal and imperial courts, in discussing the subject with the doctors of the universities. Had he entered upon this work with far less of honest conviction than he really had at first, he could hardly have failed under such a procedure to become a strong partisan. Nor need we doubt his entire honesty in it all, cruel as it seems to the forsaken and dishonored

queen, subservient as it seems to the brutish passions of her husband. Such men as Ecolampadius, Zwingli, and Calvin on the continent, men who could have had no personal interest in the matter, entirely agreed with him upon the invalidity of the marriage. And yet one cannot but feel, as he is devoting his time and his superb scholarship to the question, that he is being made the tool of the king. The only fact that forbids us to call him so is that Henry never seems to despise him. No man was ever quicker to detect a base mind than Henry VIII., or swifter to visit it with contempt when detected. And his bearing towards Cranmer is always one of respect.

While he is away upon this business in Germany (1532), two events occur which bear seriously upon his future history. He marries a niece of Osiander, and the Archbishop of Canterbury dying, the king at once nominates Cranmer to the vacant primacy. Whether Cranmer looked upon this offered elevation as a reward for service already performed, or as a bribe for other service which might be disgraceful, or whether he thought his marriage was a valid bar to its honorable acceptance, cannot be known. At any rate he desired to decline it, and did his best to escape the promotion. He tarried long upon the way home, and by one pretext after another tried to delay his return, in the hope that the monarch would change his purpose. I think he must be entirely acquitted of all selfish ambition in the matter. Indeed, the disregard for place and honor must be considered one of the distinguishing graces of his character. But he was not strong enough to refuse the king's command. At his consecration, when the usual oath of ecclesiastical allegiance to the Pope was presented to him, he took it

with an emphatic protest that his first allegiance was to his king and country ; that with him the royal supremacy must take precedence of papal authority. By this act he gained a right to the title, which some historians have accorded and others disputed, of "the first *Protestant* Archbishop of the Church of England." It was not much of a protest, however, under the circumstances. It involved no special courage. It jumped with the humor of the mighty sovereign who was at his back, and who had lifted him to his seat. Indeed, the oath would have been quite as courageous without the protest. The courage of that immediate hour was on the side of the popish party, with the bishops and priests who in various parts of the kingdom were condemning the action of the king from their pulpits. If Cranmer had been of their mind, he would probably have held his peace and let matters take their way. Nevertheless the protest, little as it cost him, was a very decided step in the progress of the Reformation. It was an official declaration, on the part of the highest ecclesiastical authority in England, of the king's and the country's virtual independence of the Pope. Invested with his new authority under this protest, he could now, pope or no pope, pronounce Henry's marriage with Katherine void, which he at once proceeded to do. And in so doing he virtually brought the first fagot for his own burning ; for by that act he necessarily declared the Princess Mary illegitimate, a fact which she will not forget — and who can blame her ? — when she comes to the throne. And so poor Katherine, unthroned, uncrowned, and robbed of a name and honor dearer to any virtuous woman than ever throne or crown could be, declared now to be only a cast-off mistress of the man to whom she

has been faithful for a score of years, her child unfathered, and declared by the highest authority of the kingdom the offspring of a guilty love, goes away to weep out her remaining life in disgrace and solitude. Papist as she was, and Protestant as I am, I blush that the Reformation ever advanced by one step at such a cost. She was a martyr quite as truly as any that her savage daughter ever roasted at Smithfield, or beheaded on Tower Hill.

Little more than a week after he had pronounced Katherine's disgrace, Cranmer set her crown upon the brows of her successor, Anne Boleyn. What a farce it must all have seemed, this crowning and uncrowning, before he had done with it! Just three years later he was called upon to declare this *second* marriage void, after standing godfather to Anne's child, Elizabeth; then to see that sight, in Christian England, under a monarch that called himself Christian, and Defender of the Faith,—that sight worthy of Nero or Herod,—of a wife beheaded one day and another wedded the next; to see *her* die after a few months of wifehood, and then to celebrate the marriage of a *fourth*; and then in a few days to preside over the convocation which annuls this bond, and in less than a fortnight more to see the royal Bluebeard adding Katherine Howard's name to the fatal list; to be compelled in a year and a half to tell the king that this last wife has played him false, and to see him wedded once more to a virtuous woman, who only manages to keep her crown upon her head and her head upon her shoulders by a piece of *finesse* worthy of Cranmer himself; to stand at last by the death-bed of the monarch, and administer the consolations of the last hour to his earthy and sensual soul; to crown his successor,

and to stand again by him in his dying hour ; and, in spite of his oath to the contrary, to lend himself to a plot that proposes to rob the rightful successor of her crown, and that brings the fairest, wisest, loveliest maiden of England to the block ; and so to wind up his fortunes with the day that closes the career of the " twelfth-day queen," — such was Cranmer's part in the matrimonial affairs of Henry VIII. Read the story from either point of view, as it has been recorded by Catholic or by Protestant writers, — and there have been moderate and reasonable, as well as violent and unfair historians on either side, — and the man's lack of heroism is palpable and lamentable. There is no heroism in him. If he is not exactly a coward, he is but one shade off. Latimer, though he believed in the illegality of Katherine's marriage, yet, put into Cranmer's place, would have lost his head from his shoulders time and again. The man's softness was largely due to nature, and largely, no doubt, to an extreme view into which he had grown of the divine right, the false and fatal theory that the king can do no wrong.

Apart from all this, however, as Archbishop of Canterbury and Primate of all England, he accomplished much for the establishment of the Reformation. He befriended it always so far as was consistent with his personal safety. As we saw in the last chapter, he befriended Latimer and Ridley. Through his early acquaintance with Anne Boleyn, in whose father's family he had lived while writing his book on the divorce question, and whom he had converted, intellectually at least, to a friendship for the new doctrines, he no doubt kept the king friendly to them also, while Anne was in favor.

In 1533, within a year of the king's marriage to

Anne, Cranmer, by his influence in Parliament, secured the passage of an act which may be regarded as the official termination of papal authority in England. It was not, of course, the eradication of papacy; that did not take place in Henry's, nor yet in Edward's time. But it very materially circumscribed the visible power of Rome. It was legally determined, and the legislation was indorsed by convocation and by the universities, that "the Bishop of Rome has no greater jurisdiction conferred upon *him* in this realm of England than any other foreign bishop." It was an entirely safe degree of influence for Cranmer to exert. It stirred up against him a virulent animosity among the bishops and clergy, to be sure, but it was a measure which would be sure to keep him in favor with the king, who was delighted with anything that would confirm his newly-assumed claim to be the head of the Church. It newly emphasized the royal prerogative, and gave Henry's assumption the force of law.

The next year he turns aside a little from politics to attend to the more strictly theological aspects of his work. With the consent of convocation, he sets on foot a translation of the Scriptures. It was at the same time and about the same business that Latimer wrote that famous letter to the king, after which Henry made the brave man his royal chaplain. The work was accomplished within the space of three or four years, and, chiefly through Cranmer's and Latimer's influence, an order was procured in 1538 that a copy of the Bible in the English tongue should be set up in every church in a convenient place for public reading. A great advance this — let us give Cranmer all the merit we can — upon the condition of things only a

little time before, when poor men and women had only little fragments of the Scriptures, painfully copied by hand, passed slyly about from one neighbor to another, hidden in barns and cellars, concealed in the rick of straw, or even buried in the ground. "It was wonderful," says Strype, "to see with what joy this book of God was received, not only among the learned sort and those that were noted for lovers of the Reformation, but generally all England over, among all the vulgar and common people; and with what greediness God's Word was read, and what resort to places where the reading of it was. Everybody that could bought the book, or busily read it, or got others to read it to them, if they could not themselves: and divers more elderly people learned to read on purpose. And even little boys flocked among the rest to hear portions of the Holy Scriptures read." And then the old chronicler goes on with the story of a boy who was persecuted at home for going to the church to mingle with the little knot of listeners, fascinated as he was with the story of the Gospels, and how, to escape his father's insane wrath, he secretly learned to read, and clubbed his scanty funds with those of another youth till they could purchase a New Testament, which they read in turn, and, to conceal it, hid it under the bed-straw; how, being discovered again and dragged from his couch by the hair of his head and beaten unmercifully, he endured the beating with a kind of joy, considering it was for Christ's sake, and shed not a tear, his father seeing which was more enraged, and ran down and fetched a halter and put it about his neck, saying he would hang him.<sup>1</sup> And so, though Cranmer

<sup>1</sup> "The cruel treatment of William Maldon, when a boy, at Chelmsford, by his Father." — *Narratives of Reformation*. Cambridge.



was not much of a martyr himself, and, if placed at that very time under the same conditions, would probably have been out-heroed by the boy, was nevertheless doing something to help the cause for which martyrs suffered.

The dissolution of monasteries and other religious houses was now going on with great vigor. Henry, finding that as head of the Church he had more than his hands full, had placed at the head of ecclesiastical affairs Thomas Cromwell, a man who, as his fate proved, was more vigorous, though less politic, than Cranmer. In this matter they two now worked together. The minister and the archbishop labored towards the same end, but with a different spirit and from different motives. The one hated to see the kingdom drained of its wealth, to send taxes and annats to Rome, and to support an idle, vicious, unproductive, and worthless class in the community. He had the eye of a shrewd and practical political economist. He longed to rid the kingdom of a burden which bore heavily upon the pecuniary interests of the king and the civil interests of the people. Cranmer, on the other hand, coöperated with Cromwell on more distinctively religious grounds. The king, of course, did not care for the spirit or motive of either so long as he could convert the vast property held in various ways to his own uses. He had lived fast, and his treasury was impoverished. His father had left enormous wealth, and Henry had come to his throne the richest monarch of Europe. But the vast resources had been squandered, and this movement promised to restore his fortunes. Suddenly it was discovered that Parliament had passed an act giving to the king and his heirs all the monastic estab-

lishments in the kingdom whose revenues were two hundred pounds per annum or less. Three hundred and eighty establishments thus fell at a single blow into the king's possession, yielding him one hundred thousand pounds ready money, and an income besides of thirty-two thousand pounds per year. Put it into the dollars of the present day, and it means seven million five hundred thousand dollars ready money, and an income of two million four hundred thousand dollars, — a sum of which ordinary minds can have not much more adequate conceptions than of eternity, or the infinitude of space. Besides all this, three or four years later the final suppression of all the monasteries was decreed. These vast resources had originally been devoted to religious, benevolent, literary, and hospitable uses. And their perversion to the uses of private rapacity was a gigantic wrong. It is no wonder that the spoliation resulted in riots and insurrections. Latimer had the courage to lift up his voice against it, like the blast of a trumpet. His white and honest soul could not bear to see the wholesale sacrilege. Cranmer also protested, but mildly. His place and position, and favor with the king, gave him the opportunity, and made it his duty, to protest with vigor, but there was no vigor in the man. He kept the line of personal safety in his eye, and dared not overstep it by a hair's breadth. There they were, — going for uses which would be of no large benefit to the people, of no advantage for public accommodation, not for hostelries, and hospitals, and caravansaries, for colleges and schools, — shrines, gold and silver vessels, relics, fair domains, abbeys, monasteries, nunneries, to be given to king's favorites, to be spent in useless wars, to be wasted in debaucheries. And

all that Cranmer and his fellow-protestants secured — and it marks like a thermometric scale the timidity of the primate — was that six new bishoprics were formed, and fourteen abbeys were converted into cathedrals, or collegiate churches. Perhaps Latimer himself would have secured no more, but he would have made a brave attempt, if he had lost his head for it.

The story of Cromwell's fall is familiar to all who have read the history of Henry VIII. Cranmer interceded for the unfortunate man, but his intercession was, like himself, weak, and of no avail. So was his intercession for Anne Boleyn, even when he knew, or might have been well assured, of her innocence.

Of course Cranmer could not take even so lukewarm a stand as he did in promoting the Reformation without making many enemies. Conspiracies were formed once and again for his overthrow by Bonner and Gardiner. But they were thwarted by the king. Cranmer was too useful a primate. Henry would rather have sacrificed the whole bench of bishops than lose one who served him so well. But these very conspiracies against him were something for after ages to be thankful for. They disclosed a lovely feature in Cranmer's character. They did not embitter him. They did not sour him. Cranmer's charity, unlike his courage, knew no circumscribing lines which it could not overstep. The very men who plotted against his life, who charged him with heresy, with malfeasance, with treason, were as freely forgiven as if they had charged him with some petty offense against propriety. So that it passed into a proverb, "Do my lord of Canterbury an injury and it will make him your friend." He was certainly Christly

upon some occasions when to have been vindictive would have been easier.

When Edward VI. came to the throne, in 1547, Cranmer, by the will of Henry, became head of the Council of Regency; but he acquiesced in the arrangement by which Somerset became Lord Protector. It was a happy day for Cranmer when he set the crown upon the young king's brow. The short time that he reigned offered few opportunities for the display of the weaker side of the archbishop's character. He was relegated now to the life which he loved, and had not to study how he might reconcile duty with the pleasure of the king. He became the quiet student among the towers and gardens of his palace at Lambeth, and engaged himself largely during these few peaceful years upon the formularies of the English Church. Those beautiful services, which every devout Christian loves, and every lover of majestic and rhythmic English admires, speak every Sunday, in every episcopal church, of the loving labor of Cranmer's pen. The noble Litany is offered through the words of his sympathetic translation. The Thirty-nine Articles were largely framed by him, a workman who, in this at least, needed not to be ashamed. He secured to the English Church a creed in consonance with those of the reformed churches of the continent. He corresponded frequently, and at length, with the wise men of Germany, of France, of Holland, of Geneva. He called scholars from abroad to shed the light of their religion and learning at the English court.<sup>1</sup> So passed the happy days until that too brief reign was over, at the close of which Cranmer again gave evidence of his weakness, and took

<sup>1</sup> See McCrie's *Knox*, Period III.

the last step which made for him the fires of Oxford inevitable. He stands by the dying-bed of Edward, as he had stood by that of his father. When Henry was dying he had exacted a vow from Cranmer that under no circumstances would he consent to any alteration in the succession of the crown. It was due to the Lady Mary, Henry's child by his first wife, Katherine of Arragon.<sup>1</sup> Her religious tendencies were well known. Even Henry himself had not been able, either by authority or force, to compel her to his views. Edward feared for the good work of the Reformation should it fall into her hands, — and after events proved that no fears could have been too strong. The dying boy made his will, by which he decreed the diversion of the crown from the immediate line of Henry to the head of his young cousin, the Lady Jane Grey, and with earnest entreaties besought Cranmer to give his sanction to the devise. It was a hard place, and Cranmer, with his tender heart towards the dying king, and with his fears for the interests of the Church, had not the strength to stand by the vow which he had made to the father, which was, moreover, the thing of right, and justice, and honor. His weakness would have sealed his doom now if it had not been sure before. He ac-

<sup>1</sup> By the will of Henry, the crown "was bequeathed to the prince (Edward) and his issue, or, in default of such issue, to his own heirs, lawfully begotten of his entirely beloved wife, Queen Katherine, or any other lawful wife whom he might hereafter marry. 'For lack of such issue and heirs' it was to descend, in compliance of Act of Parliament, to the Lady Mary and her heirs, and next to Elizabeth and her heirs, provided they married not without the consent of their brother, or of the Council to be named for his guardianship." — Froude, *Hist.*, ch. xxiii.

ceded to Edward's request, recognized the Lady Jane as queen, and, for a wonder, continued to stand by her after her cause had been deserted by nearly all others.

And so Mary, afterwards to be known as the Bloody, came to the throne. It was hers by right, and the right made her strong from the start. There were some questions that were rankling in her breast that she proceeded to answer. Who had labored with tongue and pen, with hand and foot, through England and on the continent, for years, to accomplish the dethronement of her mother? Cranmer! Who had officially pronounced that mother a twenty-years' mistress, and herself illegitimate, — a princess without a name? Cranmer! Who had joined her father's hand in marriage to an upstart of inferior rank, while her royal mother was still living, in loyal and loving seclusion? Cranmer! Who had helped her brutish father to break her mother's heart? Cranmer! And who, through all these years, had aided and abetted him in perpetuating the wrong? Cranmer! Who had officially banished from England the authority and the rites of the Church which she loved? Cranmer! Who, to crown the long list of wrongs, had permitted her personal rights to be ignored, and had lent himself to the attempt to put another upon her throne, and her hereditary crown upon the head of another? Cranmer! There was no man in the realm to whom she owed such a measure of indignation and wrath.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Foxe says, "For as yet the old grudges agaynst the archbishop for the devorcement of her mother remayned hid in the bottom of her heart, —

" 'Manet alta mente repostum  
Judicium Paridis spretæque injuria matris.' "

— *Narratives of Reformation*. Camden Society.

There can be no question, I think, that his destruction was determined upon from the moment the scap-tré was put into her hand. And that sending of Cranmer up to Oxford along with Ridley and Latimer, to dispute with the doctors about doctrines and sacraments, was all a matter of policy on Mary's part. She would have him condemned and burnt as a heretic rather than upon these purely personal grounds which I have named. She could gratify her vengeance and yet preserve a sort of religious decorum, if decorum is not too strong a word to be applied to incarnate and frantic cruelty.<sup>1</sup>

A strong glamour of romance has been thrown around the last days of Cranmer by many friendly and not always ingenuous pens. His recantations of heresy, six in number, in which he gradually conceded all that his theological enemies desired, are deemed to have been more than canceled by his dying declaration, his recantation of his recantations, and he has been triumphantly numbered with the martyrs. But I confess that I do not feel very triumphant for Cranmer as I re-read the story of his life and death. The truth is he did not withdraw his recantations so long as he perceived the hope of life before him. Only when death was certain, and he already stood face to face with the judgment-seat of God, and covering the truth could no longer avail to save his life, did he say, "This hand hath sinned, and this hand shall be the first to burn." It is like the confession which a trembling man makes when he comes

<sup>1</sup> It is also supposed by some that the queen was determined to gratify her enmity by causing Cranmer to suffer the more painful death by burning for heresy rather than by decapitation, which was the penalty for high treason.

under the shadow of the gallows. His last confession was extorted by fear, even as his recantations had been. The noble army of martyrs cannot claim him. He was the victim of his own weakness. That fatal line of self-interest was his bane to the very last.

His going into the fire was brave enough. It has some elements even of grandeur. And though his final confession was elicited by the thought that he was about to appear before God, we need not question, I think, whether it or the recantations were false. Let me close with a few words which he uttered<sup>1</sup> as he was going to the fire, that our involuntary reflections may not get the better of our charity.

“Good Christian people, my dearly beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, I beseech you most heartily to pray for me to Almighty God that he will forgive me all my sins and offenses, which be many without number and great above measure. But yet one thing grieveth my conscience more than all the rest, whereof, God willing, I intend to speak more hereafter.” And here, kneeling down, he said : —

“O Father of heaven ! O Son of God, Redeemer of the world ! O Holy Ghost, proceeding from them both, three persons and one God, have mercy upon me most wretched caitiff and miserable sinner. I have offended both heaven and earth more than tongue can express. Whither, then, may I go, or whither should I flee for succor ? To heaven I am ashamed to lift up mine eyes, and in earth I find no refuge. What shall I then do ? Shall I despair ? God forbid ! O good God ! Thou art merciful and refusest none that come to Thee for succor. To Thee, therefore, do I come. To

<sup>1</sup> *Narratives of the Days of the Reformation.* Edited for the Camden Society by J. G. Nichols, F. S. A.



Thee do I humble myself, saying, O Lord God, my sins are great, but yet have mercy upon me for thy great mercy. Thou didst not give thy Son unto death, O heavenly Father, for our little and small sins only, but for all and the greatest of the world, so that the sinner return and repent unto Thee with his whole heart as I do here at this present. . . . I crave nothing, O Lord, for mine own merits but for thy name's sake, that it may be hallowed thereby, and for thy dear Son Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

Then standing up, he said: "Every man, good people, desireth at the time of his death to give some good exhortation that others may remember after his death and be the better thereby. So I beseech God grant me grace that I may speak that something at this my departure whereby God may be glorified and you edified." Then he exhorts them against the love of the world and its false glammers, to obey their king and queen in the fear of God; that they live in love like brothers and sisters, avoiding strife and contention; that the rich in the world's goods remember how hard it is to get into the kingdom of God with their wealth; that they be generous and charitable to God's poor.

"And now I come to the great thing that so much troubleth my conscience more than any other thing that ever I did or said in my life. And that is setting abroad in writing what was contrary to my conscience and the truth, which now I here renounce and refuse as things written with my hand contrary to the truth which I thought in my heart, and written for fear of death, to save my life if it might be. And that is all such bills or papers which I have written and signed with my hand since my degradation, wherein I have

written many things untrue. And forasmuch as my hand offended in writing contrary to my heart, my hand, therefore, shall first be punished, for if I may come to the fire that shall first be burnt; I refuse the Pope utterly as Christ's enemy and antichrist, with all his false doctrine. For the sacrament I believe as in my book against the Bishop of Winchester"— *And here, adds the Chronicler, he was suffered to say no more.* And so he went to the fire, as one has said, without the apostate's shame, but without the martyr's crown.



## VII.

### MELANCTHON.

A. D. 1497-1560.

*Res et verba Philippus; verba sine re Erasmus; res sine verbis Lutherus; nec res, nec verba Carolostadius;* that is, what Philip Melancthon writes has hands and feet; the matter is good and the words are good; Erasmus Roterodamus writes many words but to no purpose; Luther has good matter but the words are wanting; Carlstadt has neither good words nor good matter. — LUTHER, *Table-Talk*. DCCCXLVI.



## VII.

### • MELANCTHON.

A. D. 1497-1560.

I AM apprehensive that the character which will now pass under review may fail to awaken that degree of interest which has been elicited by some others that we have considered. The landscape of Melancthon's life is a quiet one. There is little to make it picturesque. It has no rugged, striking, tragic features. The story has no thrilling episodes. There is little or no dramatic movement. It is the history of a retiring, thoughtful, studious man. His life is of even tenor, seldom skirting even the outer rim of a dangerous vortex, and his death is natural and peaceful. The great reformer, whose associate he was, drew both Melancthon's portrait and his own in that remarkable contrast which has been so often quoted: "I, Martin Luther, am born to be forever fighting with opponents, and with the devil himself, which gives a controversial and warlike cast to all my works. I clear the ground of stumps and trees, root up thorns and briers, fill up ditches, raise causeways, and smooth the roads through the woods: but to Philip Melancthon it belongs, by the grace of God, to perform a milder and more grateful labor; to build, to plant, to sow, to water, to please by elegance and taste."<sup>1</sup> Theologically

<sup>1</sup> Luther's Preface to Melancthon's *Colossians*.

and historically it is impossible to separate Melancthon from Luther; they belong each to the other in the story of the Reformation, as the centripetal and the centrifugal forces in the movements of nature, and for a similar reason. The one is the necessary complement of the other. The centripetal force unbalanced by the centrifugal would draw all movement inward until it would cease in a centre of perfect repose. The centrifugal unbalanced by the centripetal would fly off and expend itself uselessly in the void of infinite space. Protestantism itself generally needs to be restrained and modified by a protest within itself, as every steam-engine needs the self-controlling arrangement known as the "governor" to keep its energies within the lines of self-preservation. It is apt to go too fast and too far; to become ultra in expression and action. It was particularly so in the Protestantism which was voiced by Luther. It has been quite the fashion with historians of the Reformation to charge Melancthon with timidity and even with weakness, and the popular mind is probably possessed of such a conception of his character. But weak he surely was not, and if he was timid, his fears were never of a personal or ignoble character. His fear was never for himself, but only for the cause of truth, which he loved as fervently as did Luther. Luther was boldly and fearlessly executive; Melancthon was calmly and thoughtfully judicial. Luther saw but one thing at a time, and drove at that with all his might and main; Melancthon had at once a more penetrant and a more comprehensive vision. Dr. John Duncan said of the two men, "If a subject could be split up into twelve separate points, and also compressed into one, Luther would take the one, Melancthon the

twelve." Luther was for striking the blow, come what would, and perish what might; Melancthon saw remoter consequences, and would modify the blow in its force and its direction accordingly. Luther was very courageous, in that he dared to oppose single-handed, not only the hierarchy of Rome with all its traditions and venerable associations and worldly pomp and power, but as many devils as could pack themselves tile-fashion upon the house-tops of Worms. But I am not sure that of the two men Melancthon was not the braver, for he calmly dared to oppose or modify the opinion of Luther. In his famous utterance, "Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise; God help me!" Luther claimed the indefeasible privilege of the individual reason to know and judge the truth for itself. But after he had asserted and gained this right for himself and his German fellow-reformers, he refused the same right to Calvin and to Zwingli, and Melancthon was strong enough to protest against Luther's Protestantism at this point. Luther was the friend of private judgment for himself; Melancthon glimpsed a principle which Luther did not see, the possibility of spiritual life apart from mere dogmatic orthodoxy. He saw from afar a light, which has not yet broken in its full-orbed significance upon the world; that the truth of God cannot be absolutely fixed in human symbols; that the most perfect creed is a totally inadequate representation of the divine thought; that truth is spirit and life and therefore is perpetually renovating its expression; in a word, that the face of a sphinx carved in stone, though by infinite toil of human brain and hand, can be no permanent representation of the ever-manifesting face of the living God.



In the person of Philip Melancthon, the revival of learning and the reformation of religion found their first complete coalescence. The two movements had proceeded side by side, each more or less intimately related to the other, but never becoming identified or united in the person of any standard-bearer. Erasmus had thus far been the leader in the field of letters, the foremost scholar of his time, and at first it seemed probable that his mighty literary influence would be devoted to the cause of religion. He had attacked as vigorously as ever did Luther himself the vices of the monks and the moral degeneracy of the age. He might have won as lofty a renown had he only thought nothing of renown. He illustrates the Christian paradox that whoso saveth his life shall lose it, and whoso loseth his life for Christ's sake and the gospel's shall save it unto life eternal. He was a self-seeker and a time-server. He shunned personal danger and dreaded obloquy. And so though he sympathized with Luther, and really helped the cause of reform by his Greek Testament and by his "Praise of Folly," he held himself aloof as tribulation came on, and, it is said, spent his days hoping for a cardinal's hat, which he never got. But Melancthon, hardly second to him in scholarship, with reason to cherish as lofty earthly hopes, who was sought again and again by the papists for his great learning as eagerly as his services were gladly given to the Protestant cause, stands up in grateful and everlasting remembrance as the scholar of the Reformation. While Luther gave to the movement a force which its enemies could not resist, Melancthon imparted to it a dignity which they could not despise or ignore. What Leo X. was pleased at first to regard as a mere monkish squabble, he was soon compelled to

recognize as a movement of intellectual and spiritual power. Behind the battering-rams of Friar Martin's words, there was Master Philip's profundity of scholarship and clearness of thought. These two men seemed to have transmuted and spiritualized the callings of their respective fathers. Martin was the son of a miner, Philip of an armorer. What the one took out of the earth in huge blocks of ore, the other fashioned deftly into lance heads and coats of mail for the battle-field or the tournament. Luther could not reduce the new theology to an objective system nor present it dialectically. And so the miner's son drew forth the metal and the armorer's son fashioned it. And the church which to this day bears Luther's name, to this day uses the confession of faith which Melancthon penned.

Again, Luther made men see the pernicious nature of error; Melancthon lifted before their vision the attractive beauty of truth. The one shattered abuses; the other furnished something better to put in their place. So that while the world is right, no doubt, in honoring Luther as the head and aggressive leader of the Reformation, the popular mind, we fear, is in danger of yielding scant justice, if indeed it be not guilty of positive injustice, in the part which it attributes to Melancthon.

You may have listened to stories dramatically more interesting, you have considered no characters more winsome, more lovely, more thoroughly admirable, than that which we now consider in some detail.

Philip Schwarzerd was born in Bretten, Saxony, February 16, 1497, a year made famous by the discovery of the North American continent by Cabot, and the doubling of the Cape of Good Hope by Vasco

da Gama, the year before Savonarola was burned at Florence, five years before the University of Wittenberg was founded, which Melancthon himself was afterwards to render illustrious. His father, George Schwarzerd, was a skillful armorer, a calling in high repute in those days, bringing the artificer into the acquaintance, and sometimes into the friendship, of the knights and nobles whom he served by his craft. Go into any well-furnished museum of ancient armor like that of the Tower of London or Windsor Castle, and see the deftly-woven coats of mail, as flexible as a lady's purse and as impenetrable as an iron plate, the nicely jointed helmets and gauntlets, and think that it was all wearily forged by hand, when there was no machinery and no steam power, and you will see that the artificer was of necessity also an artist. In the Middle Ages he was treated as an officer of the highest rank; he was awarded the first place in military precedence, and his person was protected by extraordinary penalties.<sup>1</sup> George Schwarzerd's excellent work brought him into the friendship of many noblemen, and even into that of the Emperor Maximilian, who bestowed upon him, in return for a very skillful suit of armor, a family coat-of-arms, representing a lion sitting upon a shield and helmet, holding tongs and hammer in his paws. Better than all this, he was a devout, God-fearing man, allowing nothing to interfere with his habits of prayer. Kind to the poor, gentle, not concerning himself especially with laying up this world's goods, and always putting first the kingdom of God,

<sup>1</sup> There is a story told of a Highland armorer who had been guilty of some outrage for which justice was demanded. But as the chief could not dispense with his armorer's services, he generously compounded by hanging two weavers instead.

such a man of course would make good, honest, trustworthy armor. And his wife was of like mind with himself. It was thus a godly home into which Philip Schwarzerd came at his birth. For ten years only was he blessed with its shelter, but its influences never ceased to be felt. Long years after, he used to say to his students in his university lectures, "This I learned from my mother;" or, "My father taught me thus;" and when he lay dying half a century later, he repeated to his children the very words in which he had been blessed by his own dying father.

After his father's death he was sent to a preparatory school in a neighboring town, where he was domiciled with a sister of the famous scholar Reuchlin, renowned for the impetus which he gave to the study of the Greek and Hebrew languages. The lad was after Reuchlin's own heart, and a great friendship sprang up between them. Reuchlin called Philip his son, gave him books, watched the development of his scholarship with a parental interest, and, according to the custom among learned men of the day, changed his surname Schwarzerd, "black earth," to its Greek equivalent Melancthon, by which he was ever afterward to be known. Marvelous stories are told of his scholarship in these childish days, of his discussions and disputations, of his compositions in Greek and Latin poetry, of his easy superiority to all his fellows, which it is not worth while to dwell upon. One almost wearies of the story of uniform excellence both in conduct and scholarship, almost longs for some spice of boyish mischief, some exploit or escapade, some outbreak of fun or hilarity, to remind us that this prodigy is yet a boy. But for this you look in vain. The nearest approach to it is the composition

of a humorous piece in the form of a comedy, which he dedicates in gratitude to Reuchlin, and persuades his school-fellows to perform in the great scholar's presence, and which furnishes the occasion upon which he is dubbed with his new and permanent name of Melancthon.

At twelve years of age he is ready for the university and proceeds to Heidelberg. Here, too, we are greeted by the same story of unvarying excellence, of immense acquisition, of easy victory; acknowledged by the students as the Grecian of the university, doing not only his own work, but writing orations in the learned languages for his fellow-students, and even for the professors, which they are not ashamed to deliver as their own. At fourteen years of age he is Bachelor of Arts, and the university, unwilling on the score of his youth to advance him as rapidly as he wishes, he proceeds to Tübingen, the university of his friend Reuchlin. Here, at seventeen years of age, he is made Master of Arts, and begins to lecture upon the classical authors. His fame begins to spread widely. Even the great Erasmus begins to fear for his laurels, though without apparent jealousy. "What promise," he writes, "does not that youth, or boy, as we might almost term him, Philip Melancthon, hold out? He is about equally eminent in Latin and Greek. What acuteness in argument! What quickness of invention! What purity of diction! What vastness of memory! What variety of reading! What modesty and gracefulness of behavior! And what a princely mind!" And again, writing to Ecolampadius, "I am persuaded that Christ designs this youth to excel us all: *he will totally eclipse Erasmus!*" A true prophecy that, by God's inevitable laws. The name that is above

every name is that of one who was not grasping of his Godhead, but made himself of no reputation. And Melancthon had already laid his honors and his hopes at the feet of Jesus Christ.

He is now about to enter the conspicuous arena upon which his career as the scholar of the Reformation is to be enacted. It is noticeable that in his case there appears to be nothing like an epoch of conversion. He is a warm-hearted, ingenuous, devout Christian, and seems to have been so from childhood; to have absorbed a genuine spiritual religion from the atmosphere of his early home and the tuition of his father and mother, the normal way, as I believe, in the Christian household. It is the object for which the family was instituted at the first, to be the nursery of godly life and character. The flame which at any rate had been kindled very early at the altar of domestic piety, he had fed incessantly with its appropriate nutriment during his student career. A little Bible had been given him by Reuchlin, which was his inseparable companion. He carried it in his bosom to the end of life. It was oftener in his hand than any other book. He did not discover the sacred volume, as Luther had done a few years before, but had grown into familiarity with it as he had with his school-books, Virgil and Terence. His friends often saw him perusing it, and supposed it to be some favorite classic. He was reading it at church when others thought it a service-book. While the monk was preaching from some proposition in Aristotle, or detailing the stale stories of the *Gesta Romanorum*, or the legends of the saints, he was busied with the words of Jesus or the Letters of Paul. It was thus, as I said at the outset, that the revival of letters and the

reformation in religion found their first perfect confluence in this man's personal history.

After he has been five or six years at Tübingen and is now twenty-one years of age, the Elector Frederick the Wise is seeking for some scholar to be professor of Greek in his new university at Wittenberg. And by the advice of Reuchlin he applies to Melancthon, and by the advice of Reuchlin, Melancthon goes. In giving this advice to the young scholar, Reuchlin with a prophetic accuracy, which must have been a theme of wonder in after years, applied to Philip the command which God gave to Abraham: "Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred and from thy father's house unto a land that I will show thee; and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing;" adding, "This accords with the presentiment of my mind; and thus I hope it will be with thee hereafter, my Philip, my care and my comfort."

It was an era in Melancthon's life, an era in the history of the university, an era in the Reformation. These were stirring times in Wittenberg. It was then the most famous city in Europe, and the eyes of the civilized world were directed towards it. Little less than a year before, Luther had nailed up his ninety-five theses on its church door. The great protest had begun, and this had been its birthplace. And now a new factor was to enter into the work. Melancthon's fame had preceded him, and the university and the city were eager to see what manner of man he was. His first appearance was not prepossessing. Little of stature, shy and awkward, boyish and insignificant, he caused a general feeling of disappointment. But four days later, when he delivered his inaugural "On

a Reformation in the Studies of Youth," there was a mighty reaction in his favor. His conquest of the university and the town was complete. Luther was charmed. Students forthwith began to throng his lecture rooms — two thousand at once. He awakened a greater enthusiasm even than Erasmus at Cambridge. From all parts of Germany, from all parts of Europe, they came, among them princes, counts, barons, noblemen of every rank. And from the very first he threw himself into sympathy with the thoughts and purposes of Luther. He began his lectures simultaneously upon Homer and the writers of the New Testament, and kept them side by side; saying with reference to the pagan classics, that like Solomon he sought Tyrian brass and gems that he might bring them to the adornment of the temple of the Lord. I have several times intimated that in that day the surest and speediest way to touch all Europe was to come into contact with a body of university students. And what a favoring providence was this, that just at the hour when Luther was striking his first fierce blows against Tetzels and his indulgences, this man should have been sent to Wittenberg to gather there this vast body of intelligent youth, to inevitably catch the fire of Luther's indignation and spread it through the great university system. And not only indirectly by the influence of his great name did the young professor aid the reformer, but by his exposition he brought forth and illustrated the Pauline doctrines of grace and justification by faith. We can see here the reason why Master Latimer, while yet an unconverted papist, upon taking his first degree in theology made an oration against Philip Melancthon instead of taking Luther himself for a subject. Melancthon was in



reality spreading Lutheranism farther and faster than Luther was. And he was giving to Luther's notions the sanction and indorsement of the finest scholarship of Europe. Luther himself became his scholar both in exegesis and in theology. A year before this, in 1517, the same year that he posted his ninety-five theses against the sale of indulgences, Luther had begun his translation of the Scriptures, which he afterwards carried on in his Wartburg imprisonment. In this great work he now received signal help from the far better scholarship of Melancthon. The scholar collated the versions, determined the text, and revised Luther's renderings, — a work whose importance it is impossible to overestimate in the classical permanence which was given to Luther's Bible. And about the same time he performed another service which Luther himself was utterly incompetent to undertake, in erecting what was the first, and for a long time the only, important system of Protestant theology. Luther had no system, introduced none. The scholastic and patristic schemes dominated all religious thinking. As a theologian Luther simply took his place in the succession of those mighty men who arose through the Christian ages, and one by one emphasized each his own truth, and left it as his solitary contribution to the Christian thought of mankind. "The progressive landmarks of theology might be determined," says Dr. John Duncan, "by selecting typical texts of Scripture to describe the points made emphatic by the principal teachers of the Church. Thus, one might connect the name of *Athanasius* with the words, 'Go ye into all the world, teaching and baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' *Augustine*, with the words, 'By grace are ye

saved through faith, and that not of yourselves ; it is the gift of God.' 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly.' *Anselm*, with the words, 'Christ suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.' *Remigius*, 'I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.' 'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.' *Luther*, 'Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified;' and *Calvin*, 'Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.'"<sup>1</sup>

Now Melancthon rendered this most important service to Luther, which Luther was incompetent to perform for himself. He took up this doctrine of justification which Luther was emphasizing and set it in a system, exhibited it in its correlations and dependences, showed its consistency with other truth, by publishing about this time his "*Loci Communes*," or Theological Commonplaces. It really marked a great era in scientific theology ; Luther declared that it was irrefutable, and worthy not only of immortality, but of being exalted to the position of canonical authority. Even Romish theologians declared that it was doing more to injure the papal power than all other Lutheran writings together. Its clearness of method and incisive-

<sup>1</sup> *Colloquia Peripatetica*, p. 10.

ness of statement gave its simple assertions almost the force of demonstration. Erasmus said it was like a mighty army drawn up in order of battle. Calvin declared that its perfect simplicity afforded an exhibition of the noblest method of handling Christian doctrine. It spread through not only Germany, but France, and even Italy, with the rapidity of a thrilling romance. A singular fortune came to it in the latter country. It was translated into Italian and published at Venice, and the name of the author being literally translated, it was widely read and heartily approved under the name of Messer Philippo de Terra Nera, until the stupid inquisitors at length discovered that Terra Nera was Melancthon, when it was suppressed. The rose under another name did not smell as sweet. How wide its influence became may be inferred from the fact that during the author's lifetime no less than sixty editions were issued. It also indicates to us something of the ingenuous and unshackled nature of Melancthon's thought, that he was making perpetual changes in it from first to last. He saw truth as ever self-revealing, its new wine ever demanding new bottles, the inadequacy of any temporary human expression to hold permanently the ever disclosing divine thought.

Melancthon became a controversialist unintentionally upon the occasion of the Leipsic discussion at which he was present as an interested auditor. This in brief was a discussion, to which Dr. Eck had challenged Carlstadt and Luther, upon the authority of the Pope and the supremacy of the Roman Church. Melancthon wrote an account of the discussion, in which the papal contestant had been sadly worsted, and was thus personally and publicly for the first time compelled to be a participant in the great warfare.

Eck attacked him violently and with vituperation, but his violence was no match for Melancthon's calmness, nor his abuse for Melancthon's thorough scholarship. Scores of pens have recently rehearsed the story of Luther's burning of the Pope's bull in 1520, the Diet of Worms, and the escape of Luther from his enemies by being seized by the friendly messengers of the Elector, who carried him to the Wartburg. During this Wartburg imprisonment, Melancthon was left alone as the only visible leader of the Reformation, and sadly did he feel the need of Luther's inspiration. But he kept on bravely with his work, encouraged by comforting letters from his imprisoned friend, until at length a storm arose which he, mild spirit as he was, was impotent to quell, — by which indeed it seemed to some that he was likely to be swept off his foundations. We have already seen how fanaticism attached itself to the work of Wiclif in England after he died, to the work of Hus in Bohemia after he was burned, how a similar spirit arose and accomplished the destruction of Savonarola at Florence. And now, in Luther's enforced absence, a corresponding movement threatened to undo his work at Wittenberg. A handful of ignorant enthusiasts appeared from Zwickau, — the Zwickau prophets they were called, — claiming the illumination and inspiration of the Holy Ghost. They sympathized with Luther's teachings against the vices of the monks, against papal authority, and now, with the inconsistency of all fanatics, they claimed an equal or greater authority for themselves. "They boasted direct revelations from God, prophetic visions, dreams, and familiar conversations with the Deity. Scripture was a thing of secondary importance. For communion and intercourse with God, they looked not to faith,

which as Luther taught accepts submissively what the Word of God reveals to the conscience and the heart, but to a mystic process of self-abstraction from everything external, sensual, and finite, until the soul becomes immovably centred in the one Divine Being. This spirit, seemingly so elevated and pure, broke out, nevertheless, into fanaticism of the wildest kind, by proclaiming and demanding a general revolution, in which all the priests were to be killed, all godless men destroyed, a community of goods to be set up, and the kingdom of God established."<sup>1</sup> That the gentle Melancthon was no match for such an infernal outbreak was not his fault, but his misfortune. With his natural frankness and ingenuousness of disposition, he was led to seriously examine the claims of these men, when they ought to have been crushed at once and decisively. But they had won Carlstadt to their side, and Melancthon was always ready to see the reason that might be at the bottom of anything, if possibly any reason there were. Greatly to his relief, Luther, hearing of the turmoil, broke jail at once, hastened to the scene in spite of the Elector's authority and the ban which was over him, and, like the enraged lion that he was, quelled and quenched the disturbance forever.

The next important service rendered by Melancthon to the Reformation cause, was upon occasion of his appointment upon a commission to prepare instructions for the ministers in the electorate of Saxony. Here his insight and calm reasonableness again balanced Luther's tendency to ultraism. Luther's doctrine of justification by faith was liable then, as it has been in all subsequent times, to great abuse. The doctrine of the free forgiveness of all sins, upon the sole condition

<sup>1</sup> Köstlin's *Luther*, Am. ed. p. 269.

of faith in God's mercy in Christ Jesus, has been often so presented as to keep out of view the necessity of repentance on the part of the sinner. Men have gone on to sin knowing that God's grace is free and abundant. Melancthon now comes to the front with Luther's doctrine balanced and complemented by the doctrine of true penitence. He draws up for the instruction of the ministers a series of articles which is to this day regarded as the first confession of faith of the Lutheran churches. Its opening words are good doctrine for to-day. "How many," he says, "now only speak of the forgiveness of sins, and nothing or very little of repentance, and yet there is no forgiveness without repentance, and forgiveness cannot be understood without repentance. And when we preach forgiveness of sins without repentance, it will come to pass that the people will believe that they have already obtained forgiveness and will become secure and careless. Therefore we instruct pastors that they preach the *whole* gospel, and not one part without the other." How essential Luther felt this perpetual balancing and modification of *his* work by that of Melancthon to be, may be inferred from the fact, that he was laboring strenuously at this time to have Melancthon relieved from his classical work in the university and made professor of theology.

In 1529, when Melancthon was thirty-two years old, and Luther forty-six, was convened the second Diet of Spire, which gave to the reformers the name of Protestants.<sup>1</sup> By this body, the liberty which every prince had possessed, to control his own ecclesiastical affairs as he thought proper, was revoked, all further

<sup>1</sup> The first Diet of Spire, in 1526, had decreed that, until the meeting of a general council, each state should determine for itself what religion should be professed within its own territory.

innovation in religion was interdicted, the celebration of the mass was nowhere to be disallowed, and the Anabaptists were made subject to capital punishment. And this was notably accomplished merely by a majority of Catholic votes which had been procured by papal influence. Against this was the *Protest*. In this matter Melancthon had no small share. The result of that diet, which to-day is the joy of millions, caused his gentle spirit no little disquietude and sorrow at the time. He had always cherished the hope of a united church. Indeed it was his dream, after Luther and all his friends had declared it could not be, and even to the end of life. In his great agitation his friends endeavored, in vain, to cheer him, and urged him to cast his fears to the winds, to which he gave this beautiful response: "If I had no anxieties I should lose a powerful incentive to prayer; but when cares and anxieties impel to devotion, which is the best means of consolation, a religious mind cannot do without them. Thus trouble compels me to pray, and prayer drives away trouble."

Melancthon's love of an honorable peace in all matters of theological difference,—and I do not think, in spite of volumes which have been written to the contrary, that he ever desired any other,—was made conspicuous this same year at what is known as the Marburg Conference. The Saxon and the Swiss reformers differed, among other things, upon the question of the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the sacrament. Luther held essentially to the Romish view to the end of his days, making some incomprehensible distinction between transubstantiation and consubstantiation, the difference between which is no more important, and not nearly so intelligible, as

the difference between *tweedledum* and *tweedledee*. The Swiss, on the contrary, believed that the sacrament is commemorative, and that the presence is only spiritual, apprehended purely by faith in the recipient. When they came together to discuss the matter, Melancthon closed his report in these words, — words worthy of the man, and worthy to be emphasized in these days which have witnessed some disputes on less important matters: "Though we are not yet agreed whether the body and blood of Christ are corporeally present in the bread and wine, yet, as far as conscience permits, each party shall manifest a Christian affection towards the other, and both shall earnestly implore Almighty God that he would by his Spirit lead and establish us in whatever is the truth." And for this lovely spirit he was, and sometimes still is, branded as a traitor and a weakling.

The very next year (1530) a far more important affair engaged his thought and labor. The Diet of Augsburg was called to deliberate upon the Turkish war and on the existing religious disputes. The Emperor Charles V. was to be present. Luther, being under the ban, could not go, and Melancthon was chosen, of course, to stand as the head of the Protestant party. It fell to him to draw up the articles of the Protestant faith, to be presented before the Emperor, that he might be in full possession of the matters in dispute. He thus became, in a sense in which Luther never was, the very mouthpiece and exponent of Protestantism. He felt the critical and responsible nature of the task and shrank from it. Not only thought, but wakefulness and prayers, and strong crying and tears, it cost him. Again and again his tears stained his pages. It is pleasant to



us to see how a man so mighty with thought and pen could be humbled by the feeling of incompetency. But it was finished, and it is a safe thing to say that no man then living, that we know anything about, could have written the Augsburg Confession, save Philip Melancthon. It was translated into almost every language of Europe. It was read in the courts of kings and princes. It was the delight of scholars and theologians. Perhaps better than any other bequest of his pen, it embalms, for all ages, the memory of Melancthon's power and piety. By this confession, and more particularly in a defense of it, which he afterwards wrote, Melancthon, no doubt, endeavored to find some general ground upon which it would be possible to maintain fellowship with the mother church. He was naturally a pacificator, as Luther was naturally a belligerent. But I do not see that there is any need for supposing that he was not, from first to last, unchanged in his regard for the essential principles of the Protestant doctrine. It was his aim through life to assert his convictions in a form which opponents could accept without wronging conscience or violating truth. He gave other people the credit for having a conscience as well as himself. He respected the rights of private judgment more truly, I think, than even Luther did. And yet both were certainly needed for the work, as a sphere or a magnet must have two poles, as a progressing boat must be pulled simultaneously by a right-hand oar and a left. How far Melancthon was ready to go in the way of concession was still farther manifest when he signed the articles of the Smalcald Convention, particular notice of which I must omit, with the proviso that he would acknowledge the supreme authority of the Pope *jure humano*,

if the Pope would permit the preaching of the pure gospel. It is not strange that Luther's spirit cooled a little towards him for all this, and yet it shows courage and stanch conviction on Melancthon's part, that for the possibility of preserving ecclesiastical unity he was willing, even thus far, to risk Luther's dislike. But there was never any rupture. Each thoroughly believed in the other. And when Luther died, in 1546, and Melancthon was left alone, his sorrow and conscious desolation were great. No lovelier tribute of affectionate admiration was ever laid upon the grave of a friend or brother than the Latin oration of Melancthon for Luther.

The survivor tarried fourteen years, — years of weariness, and yet of incessant toil; years of doubled responsibility and of painful anxiety; years, too, in which he incurred great reproach, though I must think unjustly, as the standard-bearer of the Reformation. Possibly had Luther lived he would have been spared the censure which has fallen upon him. That censure came about, briefly, in this way. In 1548, two years after Luther's death, an attempt was made to harmonize the evangelical and papal parties by a provisional agreement, until the Council of Trent should finally settle their differences. It is known as the *Leipsic Interim*.<sup>1</sup> Under this entirely provisional

<sup>1</sup> This "Interim" was put forth as a response, on the part of the Protestants, to one which had been previously published by the Emperor. The year before, the Smalcald League, composed of those princes and cities which were favorable to the Reformation, had been overpowered at the battle of Mülberg (April 24, 1547) by Charles, who now supposed himself in a position to carry out his long-cherished idea of a united empire with an undivided church. To this end he drew up a provisional confession of faith, called the *Augsburg Interim*, which, however,

and temporary compromise Melancthon made great concessions, — concessions which Luther would unquestionably have frowned upon, and which he certainly would never have submitted to, even as an expedient, for a week or a single day. “Melancthon declared that, though the Interim was inadmissible, yet, so far as indifferent points were concerned, it might be received.” “He was willing to tolerate both a popedom and a hierarchy, provided, however, both were stripped of divine rights, and deprived of all power in matters of faith.” The relation of faith to works, and the doctrine of the sacraments, might, he thought, be expressed in such general terms that both parties could accept them for the time. He allowed the necessity of good works for salvation, but not necessity in the Romish sense. It was sufficient simply to say that they were necessary. So, too, he would allow the seven sacraments, but only as rites which had no inherent efficacy to salvation. And this was the head and front of his offense. In a time when feeling was fierce, and opinion dogmatic in the extreme, I call his conduct not pusillanimous, but courageous. He afterwards retracted even this; — it had been but tentative at most — and never swerved from that system of sound Protestant doctrine which no other than himself could have constructed, his “*Loci Communes*.” He was always ready to sacrifice a mere form of expression to the weakness or ignorance of his brethren.

There are three points in which the difference between Luther and Melancthon may be briefly expressed.<sup>1</sup>

being distasteful to Papists and Protestants alike, he was unable to enforce.

<sup>1</sup> F. A. Cox, *Life of Melancthon*, ch. xi.

1. Melancthon thought that the ancient form of ecclesiastical government might be retained on condition of not annulling the authority of Scripture.

2. Melancthon thought that Luther carried his doctrine of justification by faith to the extent of nullifying the importance and obligation of good works, and that his statements required explanation.

3. Melancthon differed in respect to the sacrament, thinking that Luther's doctrine of consubstantiation differed nothing from the Romish idea of corporeal presence.<sup>1</sup>

The remaining years of Melancthon's life were filled with the toils of his professorship, carried on often in great physical weakness and weariness, but in a spirit of thorough consecration to the cause of truth and to the kingdom of Christ. In my study of his character and work I have come to love with a kind of personal affection the gentle scholar, the unassuming and quiet but thoroughly conscientious and loyal man, whose charity was as broad and universal as his attainments, and whose far-sighted wisdom, even in the clouds and turmoils of the sixteenth century, could discern some precious principles which we, with three hundred years

<sup>1</sup> A story is told of a dinner-party invited to meet Melancthon at Tübingen, at which the famous preacher Zell, of Strasburg, was present. The latter, being asked by Melancthon what he thought of the Lord's Supper, answered, "Christ simply said, 'This is my body, this is my blood.' That I believe, and that seems to me sufficient to be said. But as for believing that I must receive the body and blood, *substantialiter, essentialiter, realiter, naturaliter, præsentialiter, localiter, corporaliter, transubstantialiter, quantitative, qualitative, ubiquallyter, carnaliter*, I believe the devil has brought these words from hell." "You are entirely correct," was Melancthon's only reply.

advantage in the nineteenth, have hardly been brave enough to assert.

His last words, as he was asked by an attendant at his bedside if he desired anything more, were, *Aliud nihil, nisi cœlum*. "Nothing — but heaven !"

## VIII.

### KNOX.

A. D. 1505-1572.

THE one supremely great man that Scotland possessed, — the one man without whom Scotland, as the modern world has known it, would have had no existence. . . . His was the voice which taught the peasant of the Lothians that he was a free man, the equal in the sight of God with the proudest peer or prelate that had trampled on his forefathers. He was the one antagonist whom Mary Stuart could not soften nor Maitland deceive; he it was that raised the poor commons of his country into a stern and rugged people, who might be hard, narrow, superstitious, and fanatical, but who nevertheless were men whom neither king, noble, nor priest could force again to submit to tyranny. — FROUDE.



## VIII.

### KNOX.

A. D. 1505-1572.

"IN the history of Scotland," says Carlyle, "I can find properly but one epoch: we may say it contains nothing of world-interest at all but this Reformation by John Knox. A poor, barren country, full of continual broils, dissensions, massacrings: a people in the last state of rudeness and destitution, little better, perhaps, than Ireland at this day. Hungry, fierce barons, not so much as able to form any arrangement with each other how to divide what they fleeced from these poor drudges; but obliged, as the Columbian republics are at this day, to make of every alteration a revolution; no way of changing a ministry but by hanging the old ministers on gibbets; this is a historical spectacle of no very singular significance. It is a country as yet without a soul; nothing developed in it but what is rude, external, semi-animal. And now, at the Reformation, the internal life is kindled, as it were, under the ribs of this outward, material death. A cause, the noblest of causes, kindles itself, like a beacon set on high; high as heaven, yet attainable from earth; whereby the meanest man becomes a citizen not only, but a member of Christ's visible Church."<sup>1</sup>

Carlyle might have spoken even more strongly and

<sup>1</sup> *Heroes*, Lecture IV.



still have been free from the charge of exaggeration. The history of Scotland is the history of the Reformation, and the history of the Reformation is the biography of one man — John Knox. Up to the time of the Reformation there can scarcely be said to have been in Scotland any compact national life, or any truly national spirit. Patriotism existed only in the crude forms of feudalism or clannishness. There was no large and comprehensive unity of feeling, no integrity of national life. Every man was primarily a clansman, only secondarily a Scot. The condition of things was thus entirely different from that which we have witnessed in England and in Germany. Both in England and on the continent feudalism had virtually come to an end; the people had advanced one degree farther at least out of their barbarism. The growth of trade and of large towns had created a powerful middle class, which is always a fountain and reservoir of national spirit. This middle class, wherever it exists, is essentially the people. *It* must be looked to, either to carry reforms, or to suppress innovations. Like the great fly-wheel of a factory, it garners, continues, and distributes power. But in Scotland there was in this sense no people. The towns, mean and insignificant at best, were severally under the control of the petty chiefs whose castles stood in their immediate vicinity, and their inhabitants knew no higher law than to follow these chiefs in their predatory enterprises, to believe as they believed, and to act as they commanded. Animosities more bitter and feuds more lasting often existed between neighboring chiefs and their respective clans than ever arose in later times between Englishmen and Frenchmen, or between Frenchmen and Germans. In a word, Scotland, down

to the beginning of the sixteenth century, was a political chaos. Out of this incongruous and heterogeneous mass it was the work of the Reformation to bring the unity, order, and compactness of national life. Whatever should accomplish such a work as this must, of course, discover and seize upon some common feeling of necessity, some universal want which lay below all differences, some felt emergency which all could recognize as pressing upon the dearest interests of all conditions of men, whether knights or retainers, chiefs or clansmen, patrons or clients.

That common necessity existed in the state of religion and its institutions. That which should stand before the eyes of men as the expression of all that is highest and holiest, truest and purest, humblest and most sincere, in the human heart towards God, and at the same time as the exponent of the divine truth, and holiness, and mercy towards man, had sunk in Scotland, as almost nowhere else, into something more than the negation of all this. Nowhere, outside of Italy, was the Church so corrupt, or so shameless in its corruption. It held in its grasp the largest share of the wealth of the kingdom. The lives of its prelates and priests were scandalous to a degree that no language that is now permissible would enable us to express. Severe as the language of Knox was in the pulpit, and broad even almost to grossness as it now reads upon the pages of his history, it is more than borne out in the stinging rhymes of the satires of the Chaucer of Scotland, Sir David Lyndsay of the Mount. Indeed, Chaucer's most realistic pictures of the English priesthood in the fourteenth century are tame when compared with Sir David's description of the Scottish clergy at the beginning of the sixteenth. The

Beatons, in licentiousness of life, in insatiableness of avarice, and in the cruelty of their judicial murders, maintained the traditions of a system that had been made infamous by a John XXIII. and an Alexander VI. The churches had ceased to be resorts for men in need of spiritual grace, or hungering for the bread of life, and had become mere marts for trafficking in indulgences, relics, and anathemas, and the common clergy were themselves densely ignorant of the meaning of the prayers which they were paid to mumble.

In addition to all this, even this poor travesty of religion was rapidly converting Scotland into a mere continental dependency. It was hardly more than a province of France. Almost all the higher ecclesiastical offices were filled by incumbents of French birth or training. The alliance of the Scottish Crown with the House of Guise, and the emphatic devotion of that house to the propagation of ecclesiasticism in its most fanatical and bigoted aspects, were leading many to fear that church and state together would soon drag Scotland into a condition of helpless and hopeless foreign servitude.

Some seeds of liberty, however, had been scattered, which were destined not to be wholly fruitless. Wafted like thistle-down over the border from England, the doctrines of Wiclif had found some obscure reception. There had been Lollards and Bible-men, though in small numbers, in Scotland for a century. They had even found their way into the young universities of Glasgow and St. Andrews. Even Hussism had had its martyr in a young Bohemian who had been burned for denying the corporeal presence and the value of auricular confession. Scottish students, too, in these later times, had strayed as far from home as Witten-

berg, and had listened to Luther and Melancthon. And it is to one of these that we must look as being the real connecting link between the German Reformation under Luther and that which was soon to become the Scottish revolution under John Knox.

Patrick Hamilton, a young man of noble blood, had pursued his studies on the continent, had been brought into contact with Luther, and had embraced his doctrines. Returning to Scotland he eagerly began to communicate the light which he had received, and may really be considered the first who lighted the candle of the great Reformation in his own land. And he lighted it very effectively, both by his life and by his death. Connected as he was, not only with the higher nobility but with royalty itself, his influence reached people of every social rank. The Scottish nobility were quite as ready as any other class to entertain reformation ideas, not because they cared much more for one doctrine than another, but because they were covetous of the immense estates which were held by the Church, at this time fully one half of the real property of the kingdom. Patrick Hamilton's preaching was getting to be dangerous. This young nobleman Archbishop Beaton decoyed to St. Andrews under pretense of desiring to confer with him upon some ecclesiastical changes, and speedily charged, tried, and convicted him, and in the same day set upon his head the martyr's "ruby crown." The flame of persecution which burned Patrick Hamilton became the flame of Revolution.<sup>1</sup> Those who kindled found themselves powerless to extinguish it. One of his retainers is said to have remarked to the archbishop, "Gif ye burn more

<sup>1</sup> "From each drop of his blood was to spring up a fresh heretic."—Froude.

let them be burnt in how sellars: for the reik of Mr. Hamilton has infected as many as it did blow upon.”<sup>1</sup> This was in 1528, one year before the meeting of that Diet of Spires which gave the name to Protestantism, eight years after Luther had burned the Pope’s bull at Wittenberg, two years before Melancthon wrote the Augsburg Confession; just about the time, too, that Henry VIII. is summoning the universities of Europe to decide the question “Whether marriage with a deceased brother’s widow is illegal.”

Not far from the time that Patrick Hamilton was taking his martyr’s degree in front of the old college gates at St. Andrews, another young man was graduating in arts at the sister University of Glasgow. A plain yeoman’s son, nobody had heard of him then; his life was all before him. But from the chariot of fire that had just gone up a prophet’s mantle had fallen unseen, that was to rest through coming years upon his shoulders; and more than the spirit and power of the Elijah who had departed was to be upon the Elisha that was coming on. This young man was John Knox, the greatest name that God through Scotland has yet given to the world. The training of his boyhood and youth had probably been not very unlike that of Latimer forty or fifty years before, excepting those differences which would naturally arise from the different social and political conditions of Scotland and England. Indeed from first to last there are many points of close resemblance between the characters and the careers of the two men. Knox was the Scottish Latimer. Their fathers were in the same rank of life. Latimer tells of buckling his father’s armor when he

<sup>1</sup> Knox, *History of the Reformation in Scotland*, vol. i., p. 42. Wodrow Society’s edition.

went to Blackheath-field ; and Knox, with a true Scotsman's liking for an ancient pedigree, relates that "his great-grandfather, gudeschir, and father, served under the earls of Bothwell, and some of them died under their standards." Both were men of the people. Both were thoroughly honest in thought and speech ; sincere, loyal, fearless ; loving truth better than life ; setting little store by earthly honors ; incorruptible, acting and speaking out their inmost hearts before prince or peasant ; rebuking wrong upon the throne or under the mitre ; both humorous and wholesomely satirical ; both beginning life as devout papists, emerging into middle manhood as protesting spirits, scoring lasting and beneficent influences upon their times and countries ; one to be sure passing out of time through fiery gates, but the other would have swerved from his path not a single hair's-breadth to have secured a more painless way.

In the course of his college career at Glasgow, John Knox has imbibed one or two dangerous principles. He has received them from a lecturer who was trained in the universities of the continent, where the light was broadly shining which as yet had hardly dawned upon Scotland. One of these principles relates to the Church, the other to the State. One is that the Church is superior to its highest officers ; that the power of popes and prelates is derived from the Church itself ; that a general council may judge, rebuke, restrain, or even depose them from their dignity ; that ecclesiastical censures and even papal excommunications have no force if pronounced upon invalid or irrelevant grounds. The other principle, relating to the State, is analogous, namely : that the authority of kings and princes is originally derived from the people, and that for just cause it may revert ; that if rulers become tyrannical

or employ their power for the destruction of their subjects, they may be controlled, and, if need be, proceeded against judicially even to capital punishment. These two principles constituted the best part of Knox's acquisition at the university. Indeed they were the basis of his whole subsequent career. More than that, they were the principles whose operation was to overthrow the Stuart dynasty, and, a hundred years after this time, to become the foundation of the Puritan commonwealths of New England, and indeed of the American government as it is to-day. But I say they were dangerous principles then and there, as the young man was to learn at his cost. Especially dangerous when such men as the Beatons had the ecclesiastical power in their hands, and the state was under such a combination of tyranny as that of the Guises and the Stuarts.

For a number of years, however, Knox seems to have revolved these principles in silence, doing nothing to bring himself into publicity or to render himself obnoxious either to the ecclesiastical or secular authority. Indeed, so far is he at present from making any break with the existing order that he becomes a priest, and then devotes himself to study and to private tuition until he is nearly forty years of age. But he has not forgotten Patrick Hamilton. That story is kept alive in his recollection by the cruelty of Beaton, and his principles are being daily confirmed by his studies of Jerome and Augustine. The merchants of Dundee and Leith, moreover, are bringing Tyndale's Bibles into the country with their merchandise across the German Ocean. The treatises of Melancthon and Luther are stealing in, in the same quiet way. Sir David Lyndsay keeps on writing his sharp satires, lashing the vices

of the clergy ; and George Buchanan, Knox's fellow-student at the university and the first scholar in Scotland, is doing the same kind of work.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, though history is silent concerning Knox for this ten or a dozen years, we need be at no great loss in conjecturing what was the course and development of his thought. During these years Henry VIII. has been divorced from Katherine and has married Anne, and the papacy has been temporarily overthrown in England. The Lutheran Reformation has conquered in Wittenberg, Calvin has published his "Institutes" at Geneva, Loyola has founded his order of Jesuits "to advance the interests of the Roman Catholic hierarchy against Protestantism within and without the Romish Church." Besides all this, and much more abroad, there has been no small stir all around him here in Scotland. The prophecy about Patrick Hamilton's *smoke* is coming true. Besides a multitude of common people, the Earl of Glencairn, Lord Kilmaurs, the Earl of Errol, Lord Ruthven, Sir James Sandilands with all his family, the Laird of Lauriston, and a great number of other men of rank have enrolled themselves as friends of the Reformation. Plainly with these principles working within and all this going on around, the man cannot remain hidden forever. He must avow himself. The occasion comes in 1543, when Knox is thirty-eight years old.

Cardinal Beaton, some time during these silent years of Knox's life, had banished from Scotland a young scholar for the crime of teaching the Greek Testament. This young man, according to all accounts a

<sup>1</sup> "If the Church of Scotland had a Luther in Knox, it had an Erasmus in the wide and polished culture of George Buchanan." — Dean Stanley, *Scottish Church*, p. 98, English edition.



most lovable and winsome character, went to Cambridge, and fell under the influence of Bilney and Latimer. How wonderfully all this reformation history in England, in Germany, in Scotland, is jointed and dovetailed together by the coincidences of personal experience! You recollect how Savonarola converted John Colet, and Colet Erasmus, and Erasmus Bilney, and Bilney Latimer. And now here we discover two links more of the same chain. Bilney and Latimer together awaken the faith and devotion of George Wishart, the banished Scotchman. He returns to Scotland in this year 1543, and arouses in John Knox a zeal which regenerates the nation. There is something almost romantic about the attachment of these two men. They were thoroughly unlike save in their common love for the truth. Wishart is gentle as a woman, courteous, affable, a veritable son of consolation; not wanting in courage, to be sure, for he is threatened with assassination continually if he will not stop preaching; but all the gentler graces seem to be predominant, just the opposite of Knox. Knox is held by him as by the power of a spell; is charmed and devoted; follows him around from place to place; accompanies him everywhere, with a sword to defend him from any possible violence; plays, in a word, the part of big brother to him, though he himself is of no great stature; but he feels like a lion, and would die for George Wishart. But Wishart's preaching cannot be long endured by Cardinal Beaton. It is mighty, mightier even than Patrick Hamilton's. It takes hold of strong men and melts them. They love him for his very gentleness. They attach themselves to him as publicans and sinners once attached themselves to the young preacher of Galilee; and the

priests hate him as their predecessors hated the Nazarene, and for the same reason. Beaton seizes Wishart and burns him up, and Knox is now a Protestant to the backbone.

And yet it is a difficult thing to get this man to take up the work. There is some feeling of conscious inadequacy about him which holds him back. He has fairly to be thrust into it. The cross is laid upon his shoulders by other hands; he does not take it up himself. But once laid upon him he never dares to put it off till God Almighty changes it for a crown. As we see him, in later years, standing calm in the presence of indignant and threatening royalty, daring the scaffold and the flame, it is difficult to believe that John Knox ever shrank in timidity or wept in self-distrust. The charge which has sometimes been made against him, that he was a man of hasty and turbulent impulses, that he had a zeal that outran wisdom, is abundantly disproved by the extreme hesitancy with which he entered even the outermost portals of an active reformer's life, and that only when he was forty-two years of age.

He had taken refuge with some pupils in the Castle of St. Andrews, which at that time was the headquarters and stronghold of those who were attached to the reforming interest, and was there quietly conducting their education and reading them lectures, among other topics, upon the Gospel of St. John. There are some of the garrison who hear him, and the knowledge of his teaching gets abroad. There are some wise and some great men there,—Sir David Lyndsay of the Mount, and Henry Balnaves, Lord of Session. They desire him to fill the place of preacher to the garrison. He is shocked at the very suggestion. He cannot,

will not run, where God has not manifestly called him. Then say they among themselves, "He shall be manifestly called." Now Knox will have to stand for the first time by that old principle of his about the power of the Church to create its own officers. It has an application which he has not thought of in any relation to himself. The plan is shrewdly laid and skillfully executed. On a fixed day all the congregation are assembled, Knox, of course, among them. A sermon is preached in which is declared the power of any congregation, however small, over any one in whom they perceive gifts suited to the office, and the danger of such a person in rejecting the call of those who desire his instruction. And then, in application, said the preacher, fixing his eyes upon Knox, "Such a person this congregation find you, John Knox, to be. And in God's name, and in the name of all who are here present, I charge you not to refuse this vocation, but to take upon you this public office and charge of preaching, even as you look to avoid God's displeasure and desire his grace to be multiplied unto you." Then to the congregation: "Was not this your charge to this man, John Knox, by my lips?" And the congregation rises up as one man with one voice, "It was, and we approve it." And the modest man, yet no braver in all this world, is overwhelmed, bursts into tears, and flies in confusion and distress to his chamber.<sup>1</sup> It is well to remember this afterwards, when he will be charged with willfulness and conceit of his own opinion, and a bigoted desire to compel the consciences and wills of men into conformity with his own ideas of truth and duty. But he is compelled to

<sup>1</sup> Knox, *History of the Reformation in Scotland*, vol. i., p. 187. Wodrow Society's edition.

abide by his principle. This is the way that bishops are made, if truly made at all; in this way does the hand of the great Head of the Church reach the head of his anointed, then and now. This is God's ordination; this is valid until the same power shall revoke it, — pope or prelate cannot. Henceforth his gift of thought and utterance belong to God and to God's true cause in Scotland or in all the world, wheresoever God's Providence may send him.

That Providence sends him very soon to strange quarters, — a most unpromising field, one would think. Yet what place can there be where truth needs not to be lived and spoken? A few days or weeks, at most, elapse when a French squadron appears before the Castle of St. Andrews, and the little garrison is compelled to surrender. The honorable terms of capitulation are grossly violated, and Knox, with others, is carried off to France and confined in the galleys. The life of a galley-slave was peculiarly calculated to crush the very spirit out of a man. As a punishment it was brutal and imbruting; the men chained together and to their oars, with insufficient room for any natural muscular action, sometimes under a stifling deck; compelled often to tug at the oar without cessation for twenty-four hours together; their very food put into their mouths by the master; the slightest relaxation of effort visited with the stinging lash; if one sank exhausted, speedily thrown overboard, and another chained in, in his place; all this, of course, had a tendency first to embitter, then to dehumanize and make ferocious, and finally to stupefy. To preserve patience and hope and courage, and, most of all, an independent spirit, under such physical conditions, were marvelous, well-nigh miraculous. But Knox was the man to

do it. He could have sung a song at midnight along with Paul and Silas, in the Philippian dungeon, with his feet fast in the stocks. Like them, he not only preserved his own spirit, but was a comfort to his fellow-prisoners. Every attempt was made to induce or compel them to deny their faith, but there was no wavering even on the part of a single man. The spirit of Knox seemed to take possession of the entire crew. "Mother! Mother of God, forsooth!" he says, in scornful indignation, as the galley-master holds out an image of the virgin for him to kiss, and, releasing a hand from the oar for an instant, he sweeps the thing overboard: "She is but a painted bredd, I tell you—let her swim!"<sup>1</sup> In their cruising, they come again under the walls of dear old St. Andrews, and the prisoners recognize the beloved towers, but almost despair as they are not permitted to touch their native soil. "Be of good cheer," he says; "I see the steeple of that place where God first opened my mouth to his glory, and I shall not depart this life until I have glorified Him again in that same place." And yet, notwithstanding all his cheer and bravery, I cannot doubt that this two years' life of slavery in the galleys, while it made his convictions the more precious, and, as it were fire, burnt the gold of truth into the very substance of his mind, added somewhat, also, to the asperity of his character. It is well for us to recollect what a much suffering man he had been at the hands of that system which he afterwards fought with such indignation and almost unsparing fury. He will need no apology for his warfare that gives and asks no quarter.

<sup>1</sup> Knox, *Reformation in Scotland*, vol. i., p. 227. Wodrow Society's edition. "After that," he quaintly adds, "was no Scottish man urged with that idolatrie."

When Edward VI. came to the throne of England it is supposed that Knox was released at his personal request. At any rate we find him now for a number of years in England, and made one of the king's chaplains. This is that happy time when Latimer was tarrying with Cranmer in Lambeth, and Knox must have frequently been in conference with them. Here in England, notwithstanding he is worn and wasted with his long galley servitude, he enters into abundant labors, — stationed at Berwick, and then at Newcastle in the north, preaching every day and often several times in the day, the English Church glad to receive him, notwithstanding his Scottish accent, and even almost thrusting him into places of distinction. They want to make a bishop of him. The Duke of Northumberland writes to Secretary Cecil, that he would make a good whetstone to sharpen my Lord of Canterbury; but Cranmer, we fear, would have wanted even more sharpening than Knox could have given him: it was temper, rather than sharpening, that *that* blade needed, and Knox could not have imparted that, even as Latimer had failed. But Knox would not have the English bishopric, nor yet the vicarage of an important church, but kept his eye and his heart towards Scotland. He did not believe there was any Scriptural authority for the episcopal office as it existed either in the Romish or the English Church. The only true bishop, he said, was a preacher of the gospel; his principles were of more consequence to him than a mitre and a crozier, and all the honor and power and emolument that would have accompanied them; but he would preach for these Englishmen anywhere in the kingdom till such time as it pleased God to let him go over the Scottish border.

And that time was not yet. For the work which needed to be done in Scotland he needed some training different from any that had thus far fallen to him.

And so when Bloody Mary comes to the throne, he is compelled to go to the continent. Had he accepted the bishopric, or even a simple vicarage, we may be sure he would not have done this; he would have stayed by his post till Mary had dismissed him, along with Latimer and Ridley and Cranmer, through the flames. But he was simply an exile, a wandering preacher; and so he turns his steps to the continent, January, 1554.

I cannot dwell upon this continental experience, his visits to various French and Swiss churches, his conferences with learned men, his acquaintance with Calvin and the regimen of Geneva, from which he was confirmed in those old principles of his by seeing their practical working, and which were afterward to be embodied in the constitution of the Scottish Church. Neither can I dwell upon his literary work, in aiding in the translation of the English version of the Sacred Scriptures known as the Geneva Bible, and in composing the Liturgy which became the guide of the public worship of the Reformed Church of Scotland down to the time of the Westminster Confession. There is one feature that comes out clearly in Knox's character at this time that we must not lose sight of. He is far more stern in his judgment of himself than he ever is in the denunciation of others. No one has read Knox's character aright who has come to look upon him as a narrow, uncharitable, censorious, self-righteous, and self-constituted judge of the characters of those who differed from him. In a letter written during this Geneva exile to his mother-in-law, who was to

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him a mother in deed, he says: "Alas! this day, my conscience accuseth me that I spake not so plainly as my duty was to have done. The blind love that I did bear to this my wicked carcass was the chief cause that I was not fervent and faithful enough. I was not so diligent as my office required, but sometime, by counsel of carnal friends, I spared the body; sometime I spared in worldly business. And besides I was assaulted, yea, infected with more gross sins: that is, my wicked nature desired the favor, the estimation, and praise of men, and so privily and craftily did they enter into my breast that I could not perceive myself to be wounded till vainglory had almost got the upper hand." This may be called morbid; it is certainly conscientious and unsparing towards himself.

The influence of Geneva upon Knox has probably been overestimated. His opinions and principles were formed long before he came into contact with Calvin and Beza. Calvin was in no sense his master, but his *confrère*. Knox was fifty years of age before he saw Calvin. He was confirmed by the Genevan, not conformed by him. Those early principles which were instilled into him at Glasgow College were adopted by him before they were received by Calvin; and those principles, underlying as they did the thinking of both, brought the two men into life-long sympathy.

I must not pass over one of the most important, and certainly the most injudicious, act of Knox's life, which was performed here at Geneva,—an act which he undoubtedly felt to be called for at the time, but which sadly handicapped him afterward. Aroused to fierce indignation by the cruelties of Bloody Mary, which had exiled him to the continent, he wrote a treatise against woman's rights, which he called "The First



**Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstruous Regiment of Women;**" in which he inveighed strongly against the right of woman to hold the reins of authority. He gained sufficient wisdom never to give a second blast.<sup>1</sup> The book made him obnoxious to two queens, during whose reigns he had his part to play; to Mary, Queen of Scots, who was soon to take her hereditary throne, and to Elizabeth of England, who was to exert as great a power in Scotland as any of its own sovereigns.

In 1559, after his long exile of twelve years, which had been but once, and then briefly, interrupted, Knox returned to Scotland for the conflict which ended only with his life. Mary of Guise, widow of James V., was acting as regent. Through all these years the reformation movement was growing and consolidating, and through all these years it had been looking towards Knox as its only capable leader, and its friends had longed for his permanent restoration. He returned just in time, as he said, for the brunt of the battle. The regent had just entered into an agreement with the Guises of France to assist them in their designs against Elizabeth, and as a part of the plan had determined to suppress the Reformation by force. This determination had the effect to still further consolidate and arouse the reforming interest, which was doubly courageous now that Knox was among them. Almost immediately, without any intention on his part, he was forced into the part of an iconoclast. After one of his sermons at Perth against image worship and idolatry of the mass, the "rascall multitude," as

<sup>1</sup> "My purpose is *thrise* to blowe the trumpet in the same mater, if God so permitte: *twise* I intende to do it without name, but at the last blast, to take the blame vpon my selfe, that all others may be purged." — Preface to *The First Elast*, etc.

Knox himself called them, beset a priest who was about to celebrate mass, and did not desist until they had sacked a monastery and laid it in ruins. It was a wild, frantic outburst of the people because their ministers had just been outlawed. It was an act of that barbarism which Rome itself had done its best to perpetuate. "It is hard, certainly," says Principal Tulloch,<sup>1</sup> commenting upon the iconoclasm of the Scottish Reformation, "to blame that Reformation for an odious inheritance of social disorder transmitted to it by the corrupt system which it displaced." It was not an act of premeditated rebellion. But the people had suddenly found their power, and the queen-regent discovered it too, and prudently made an accommodation with the Protestants. The Protestant leaders, who now came to be known as the Lords of the Congregation, soon took possession of the capital, deposed the regent, concluded a treaty with England, and with the assistance of troops, sent to their aid by Elizabeth, became the masters of Scotland, and called a free parliament to settle religious difficulties. Almost instantaneously Scotland was revolutionized. The hated repression exercised by the Guises was virtually at an end. By a single act the reformed religion became the religion of the state, and Knox was the Savonarola whose influence was paramount. Roman Catholic worship was interdicted, and the Pope's jurisdiction abolished. It was the real beginning of anything like a compact and unified national life for Scotland. But so far it was the work of the people by themselves. The estates had wrought, and with great unanimity, but without the throne. Mary of Guise died shortly after her deposition, and young Mary, Queen of Scots, came home

<sup>1</sup> *Luther and other Leaders*, p. 399.

the next year to take her throne. And now begins that long story, upon which fortunately we are not required to enter far, which has been the theme of conflicting historians and romancists and poets and dramatists for three hundred years. What was Mary of Scotland? Can anybody surely tell us? That she was young and fair and fascinating all agree. That she was frail too many say. That she was relentless, cruel, even to treachery and murder, is averred. That she was an injured saint a few have been bold enough to affirm. That she was a combination of Guise and Stuart blood is not antecedently in her favor. That she married Darnley without love, and afterwards, while professing most ardent affection, was privy to the diabolism of blowing him up with gunpowder while a convalescent; that she took an Italian musician for her paramour, whose blood-stains are still on exhibition for a sixpence at Holyrood House; that she gave her love to Bothwell before blowing Darnley out of life, and married him out of hand when that horrid work was accomplished: all this on one side. And that she was a most refined and scholarly lady, so devoutly pious withal that she could write "O Domine Deus! speravi in Te," and must have going on about her the perpetual offices of religion, on the other side; and who can tell us the truth? And who knows what were her relations with Elizabeth, and her designs upon the British throne? It is all one of the insoluble puzzles of history.

But now, her relations with Knox. Knox is now, at her coming home, the pastor of Edinburgh; in fact, as truly Archbishop of Scotland as ever Beaton had been of St. Andrews in his proudest, lordliest days. Mary's first act upon coming into the realm had been,

in contravention of the well-known act of Parliament, and in spite of the well-known temper of the nation, an act of bold defiance, in setting up the mass at Holyrood. It would have been more gracious, to say the least, had she asked for some consultation, or in some way sought for accommodation. It was doubtful in the then temper of the people, after ages of outrage, to be sure, whether any arrangement could have been made. It would, at least, have propitiated them, and the regard thus shown for the popular feeling would have won for her strength which she greatly needed. Of course there was a blast at once from the pulpit of old St. Giles' Church, which was a throne at that hour more powerful than that at Holyrood. Mary is indignant at what she thinks the reformer's coarse handling of the affair, and summons him at once to the palace. The picture is one that has been often drawn by the muse of history and her sister of romance. Mary in tears, and Knox calm, unmoved, and with a sternness upon his face that reminds one of John the Baptist in the presence of the king whom he had dared to rebuke. Of course there can be no coalescence of feeling, no sympathy of either for the other. Mary and Knox are not two private characters in this matter, whose personal rights and privileges are at stake. Each is the embodiment of a principle. Mary says, "Might is right." Knox insists that "Right is might," and sooner or later they two and all the world find it so. And yet there is every reason to believe that Knox, if he could have done so, would have yielded somewhat to Mary's tears. He is not steel all through. He does not like to see the woman weep. He feels that he is getting to be an old man and she is but a girl. He tells her that he

takes no delight in any one's distress; that he can hardly bear to see his own boys weep when corrected for their faults; but that since he had only discharged his duty he was constrained, though unwillingly, to sustain her majesty's tears rather than hurt his conscience and betray the commonwealth through his silence.<sup>1</sup>

In all the interviews between the queen and the reformer, and there are six of them narrated by himself, there does not seem to be any real rudeness on the part of Knox. It is sheer manliness all through, and loyalty, not first to his queen to be sure, of course not, but loyalty to God and the great Scottish nation, at the head and heart of whose true interests God has placed him. Her language indeed is the more rude. "Who are you that presume to school the nobles and sovereign of this realm?" "Madame, a subject born within the same."<sup>2</sup>

There is little more that can be told within my present limits, of Knox's connection with the Scottish revolution. I must commend my readers to the quaint and racy pages of his own inimitable "History." He is the real king in Edinburgh, and in Scotland, preaching on, week after week, in old St. Giles', whose stern and unadorned grandeur, as it rises with its imperial crown high above the old town to-day, is the best illustration of his character. Crowds, three thousand at a time, press within its walls to hear his burning words, whose fire does not dim with the growing age and bodily weakness of the man. The English ambassador writes to Cecil: "Where your

<sup>1</sup> Knox, *History of the Reformation in Scotland*, vol. ii., 389. Wodrow Society's ed.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

honor exhorteth us to stoutness, I assure you the voice of one man is able in an hour to put more life in us than six hundred trumpets continually blustering in our ears."

With varying fortunes of some small ebb and flow the Reformation goes on, until Mary marries Bothwell and is compelled to abdicate in favor of her son, and the good Murray is made regent. At length the throne in St. Giles and the throne at Holyrood are in complete accord. It seems as if the old man were to be permitted to see the completion of his work; but suddenly Murray is assassinated, and his friend, worn out already with labors out of number and out of measure, is prostrated by this grief in a sickness from which he never recovers.

Almost his last public service is a complete vindication from all those charges of rudeness, indelicacy, and injustice which have been so liberally showered upon him for three hundred years. Over from France come those thrilling echoes of Catherine de Medicis' midnight bell, and the massacre of St. Bartholomew. This is the work of the bloody Guises. For this they have been scheming over yonder there in France. With these fiendish plotters the lovely Queen of Scots is in league until death. That tolling might have been heard from St. Giles' tower but for John Knox. And bitter and grievous as the disastrous tidings must have been to the faithful old man, we are glad that he was spared long enough to creep up the High Street and into his pulpit, to breathe out what was at once the expression of his indignation and a perfect vindication of his life-long and far too thankless conflict.



## IX.

### CALVIN.

A. D. 1509-1564.

WHILE laboring for the destruction of absolute power in the spiritual order, the religious revolution of the sixteenth century was not aware of the true principles of intellectual liberty. It emancipated the human mind, and yet pretended still to govern it by laws. In point of *fact*, it produced the prevalence of free inquiry; in point of *principle*, it believed that it was substituting a legitimate for an illegitimate power. It had not looked up to the primary motive, nor down to the ultimate consequences of its own work. It thus fell into a double error. On the one side, it did not know or respect all the rights of human thought; at the very moment that it was demanding these rights for itself, it was violating them towards others. On the other side, it was unable to estimate the rights of authority in matters of reason. I do not speak of that coercive authority which ought to have no rights at all in such matters, but of that kind of authority which is purely moral, and acts solely by its influence upon the mind.—GUILZOT, *History of Civilization*. Lect. xii.





## IX.

CALVIN.

A. D. 1509-1564.

THERE are certain great rivers which send their waters out into the sea with such force and volume that they continue for many leagues from their mouths unmixed and clearly distinguishable from the flood around them. They flow on as rivers still, preserving their integrity, their freshness, and even their color, though their banks are no longer of earth or of rock, but only of yielding water, like themselves. The great ocean of human thought and life is continually replenished by streams of personal influence. Each thinker, discoverer, actor, brings into the world's work his individual contribution, which is soon swallowed up. It has its own proper effect, no doubt, upon the quality of the great whole, but it speedily becomes untraceable as a distinct and personal force. Literature, law, science, art, are, for the most part, aggregations of impersonal energy, which it is impossible now to analyze and redistribute to their several sources. But in all departments of the world's history there are some men, like the Amazon, whose work refuses to be speedily absorbed and assimilated. After they have poured themselves into the world's common treasury of thought and experience, they remain still what they were before. So strong, and vigorous, and force-

ful are they that their personality abides. Such men are Coke and Blackstone in law, Shakespeare in letters, Bacon in science, Michael Angelo in art. The cessation of visible life in each of these cases has made no difference in the integrity of force and influence.

And such a man is Calvin in theology, a man whose influence is as personal and sharply defined after three centuries have passed over his grave, as when he made his first contribution to the world's religious thought.

This figure which I have used — of a mighty river which shoots its flood far out into the sea — is capable of a further expansion. If we seek for the reason why the man's influence so long survives himself, we need not go far to find it. He gathered up the spiritual and intellectual forces that had been started by the reformation movement, and marshaled and systematized them, and bound them into unity by the mastery of his logical thought; as the river gathers cloud and rill, and snow-drift and dew-fall, and constrains them through its own channel into the unity and directness of a powerful current. The action of Luther was impulsive, magnetic, popular, appealing to sentiment and feeling; that of Calvin was logical and constructive, appealing to understanding and reason. He was the systematizer of the Reformation. Melancthon, to be sure, essayed something in the same direction, as we have already seen; but his Augsburg Confession, compared with Calvin's "Institutes," is as a log-hut of the backwoods compared with a military fortress. Luther's work was national; so was Latimer's; so was Knox's. Calvin's work was national, and more; he gave to the Reformation a universality like that of the gigantic system with which they all were at war.

Calvin, more than any other man that has ever lived, deserves to be called the Pope of Protestantism. While he was still living his opinions were deferred to by kings and prelates, and even after he was dead his power was confessed by his enemies. The papists called his "Institutes" the "Heretics' Koran." Thirty years after his death, Cardinal Alexander de Medicis, afterwards Pope Leo XI., while on a journey, turned aside with his whole retinue, got down from his litter, and went on foot to see the cottage in which he had been told John Calvin was born.<sup>1</sup> Not a few, even at this day, accord to him the attribute of infallibility. He set up authority against authority, and maintained and perpetuated what he set up by the inherent clearness and energy and vigor of his own mental conceptions. The authority of the Romish Pope was based upon the venerable tradition of the past that had grown up by the accretion of ages; the authority of the Protestant Pope rested upon a logical structure which he himself built up, out of blocks hewn from alleged Scripture assertion and legitimate inferences therefrom. The authority of the Romish Pope was not unlike that image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, whose brightness was excellent, and the form thereof terrible, with its head of fine gold, its breast and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of brass, its legs of iron, and its feet part of iron and part of clay; without homogeneousness and without consistency. The authority of the Protestant Pope was both homogeneous and consistent, but it was a skeleton rather than an image. He put the Bible into his crucible and set under it the fires of his pure, logical processes, until he had consumed from it all the graces of imagina-

<sup>1</sup> Guizot, *St. Louis and Calvin*, p. 156.

tion, all the soft and flowing garniture of fancy and of feeling, and turned it out a system, a skeleton, showing admirable proportions and nice articulation, but its living tissues destroyed and its fresh color gone.

Let no one suppose that I shall fall into the cheap fashion of the hour, of sneering at Calvin or of depreciating his work. The man himself is one of the wonders of all time, and his work was admirable, beyond any words of appreciation that it is possible for me to utter. For while he himself tolerated no differences of theological opinion, and would have bound all thought by his own logical chain, this nineteenth century is as much indebted to his work as it is to that of Luther. That work constituted the world's largest step towards democratic freedom. It set the individual man in the presence of the living God, and made the solitary soul, whether of prince or pauper, to feel its responsibility to, and dependence upon, Him alone who from eternity has decreed the sparrow's flight or fall. Out of this logical conception of the equality of all men in the presence of Jehovah, he deduced the true republican character of the Church; a theory to which all Americans, and especially we of New England, owe our rich inheritance. He gave to the world, what it had not before, a majestic and consistent conception of a kingdom of God ruling in the affairs of men; of the beauty and the blessedness of a true Christian state; of the possibility of the city of God being one day realized in the universal subordination of human souls to divine authority.

The name of Calvin is as indissolubly associated with the history of Geneva as is Savonarola with that of Florence, or Hus with that of Prague. It will be

necessary, therefore, to an understanding of his work, to glance at the condition of affairs in Geneva in the earlier part of the sixteenth century. During the first quarter of the century, *i. e.*, while Calvin was boy and youth, Geneva was in a condition of anarchy, the causes of which lay far in the past. To go no farther back, however, than the period just preceding the reformer's birth, in 1504, Charles III., Duke of Savoy, entered into a struggle for the subjugation of Geneva, which lasted for twenty years. Finding that he could accomplish nothing by wily plots with the citizens themselves, he procured, through the Pope, Leo X., the appointment of a scion of his own house (Savoy) as bishop, upon condition that the bishop should give the control of the city, so far as civil affairs were concerned, into the hands of the duke. This resulted in a rebellion on the part of the citizens, which ultimately became a revolution, and liberated the city from the Savoy control, and put the power, civil and military, into the hands of the citizens. Of course, there were two parties among the citizens themselves, — a popular and a ducal, or a republican and a Savoyard party. Nicknames were bandied to and fro, as in all such conflicts; and we come here, for the first time, upon one of those terms, which, being originally applied in contempt, become in time badges of high honor and moral nobility. The ducal party, whose recklessness and licentiousness made them despicable in the eyes of the quiet and more respectable people, were called Mamelukes. The opponents of the duke, who were in favor of forming a compact with the Swiss, were termed Confederates, *eidgenossen*, afterwards corrupted into *huguenots*. The *eidgenossen*, or citizen party, were successful, and the duke

and his family bishop were thrown out. So far, it was simply a civil revolution. In fact, neither one party nor the other cared much for any religious reform.

But about this time there came to Geneva a young Frenchman, William Farel, preaching the doctrines of religious liberty promulgated by the German reformers, and showing up the vices, superstitions, and idolatries of the Romish Church, — a man of great zeal and intrepidity, utterly fearless, and of unbounded enthusiasm, preaching at all times and in all places, in town or in field, regardless of his life, and frequently hazarding it in the boldness of his denunciations; a man who knew how to kindle a flame of popular feeling, but without the power to organize or control it. By order of the council, a public disputation was held, at which Farel challenged any one to discuss with him the subjects in debate between the Church of Rome and the reformers. The result of the discussion was a sudden and almost volcanic religious revolution. The people, demoralized by their civil disturbances, impulsive and impetuous, impatient of restraint, carried away in part by the sense of freedom already gained in political affairs, rushed to the churches, destroyed the relics, overthrew the altars, and then by act of council abolished the Romish religion and declared Protestantism established in its place. But no act of council or Parliament or congress can make a people religious. The forces which had been set free by Farel, and the liberty which had been proclaimed by edict, needed to be organized, controlled, and directed, and Farel felt his helplessness.

Such was the condition of affairs when Calvin suddenly appeared in Geneva, coming into the city as a stranger, and intending to tarry but a night, but des-

tioned to be for thirty years its most conspicuous citizen, and forevermore identified with its history. And who was Calvin?

John Calvin was a Frenchman, born in Noyon, Picardy, July 10, 1509, four or five years after the Savoyard struggle began in Geneva. Unlike most of the characters which we have passed under review, his childhood was spent in circumstances of great comfort, not to say of affluence. His father was a man of influence in church and state, and by his official relations was able to open at once to his son the avenues of preferment. He was placed for his early tuition in a noble family, to be educated with their children. That abundant means might not be wanting during his career as a student, when he was only thirteen years old, his father procured for him a presentation to an ecclesiastical benefice, and still another when he was eighteen, though he never was ordained according to the rites of the Church. In regard to these early benefices two things are noticeable as indicating the clear integrity and crystalline firmness of his character. One is, that, being educated thus with abundance of worldly resources at his command, placed in entire independence at thirteen years of age, he did not become soft and effeminate; that his energies did not evaporate in indolence and self-indulgence; that his moral fibre did not become flaccid; that his mental power maintained from first to last its fine, hard grain and temper. And the other notable thing is, that when the definite course of his life was settled in his own mind, he resigned his benefices, though the resignation left him poor, and poor he remained to the end of his life. Not that there was any superfluous honesty in the act, but it was out of keeping entirely with



the ecclesiastical morals of the time. I said that he did not become soft. On the contrary, during these early years at Paris, at first under the famous Corde-rius, and then under a learned Spaniard who was also the instructor of Loyola, he was rigorously abstinent in his living and most ardent in his studies. He was a reformer in spirit before he was through with his Latin Grammar, so out of sympathy with even the innocent frivolities of boyhood that his fellows nicknamed him the "Accusative Case." He seems to have had a marvelous acuteness and power of mental mastery from the outset. He saw through things from their roots to their ramifications without effort, a very incarnation of logic. Of such a penetrating genius himself, he had no patience with stupidity, and little forbearance with those who saw differently. This, along with that low living which, however favorable to high thinking, wastes the physical energy and makes the nerves sensitive and intolerant, gained for him the reputation of censoriousness. His face was thin, the features pinched, his eye unearthly in its keenness, his frame wasted, his intellect a Damascus blade sheathed in too frail a scabbard, an electric light inclosed in a shade of too little opacity.

For ten years he gave himself to language and logic and philosophy, a severe and unsparing discipline, which made him the prince of reasoners and the perfect master of Latin elegance and terseness that he was. Never was man clearer in the apprehension of his own thought, or more precise in its expression. One of his chapters is like a web of chain-mail.

At this time two events occurred which turned him for a while into a different course. His father had a quarrel with some of his ecclesiastical friends, and

thought that the law offered better opportunities for his son's promotion than the priesthood, and Calvin himself began to think less of an ecclesiastical career through some studies which he had been making in the Bible. To Orleans, therefore, he now betook himself for the study of the law. It had not the same fascination for him as his previous studies, nevertheless he gave himself to it with the same energy and with the same distinguished success, at the same time sitting up half the night and often living upon one meal a day that he might keep up the studies which he was unwilling to drop. His knowledge of jurisprudence was soon so comprehensive and profound that the professors frequently called upon him to take their duty in the lecture-room. There was no position in the legal profession, it is said, to which he might not have aspired, and in his twenty-fourth year the university bestowed upon him the doctorate without fees, as a compliment to his legal acquirements.

It must have been while he was here at Orleans that the great change occurred which marked the beginning of his spiritual life, and which led him to take the side of the reformation party. We do not know much about it. There is only a hint given incidentally in the Preface to his "Commentary on the Psalms." He was always reticent concerning his spiritual experiences, but he speaks there in few but very significant words of his "sudden conversion." "I became conscious of my wretchedness," he says; "and there was nothing left for me but with tears and cries of supplication to abjure the old life, which Thou, O Lord, hast condemned, and to flee into thy path." Of this change he says, "God himself suddenly produced it. He instantly subdued my heart to the obedience of his will."

Meagre as is the information which Calvin has given us concerning this crisis in his experience, I think we may find in it the key not only of his subsequent life, but of his theological system. It bears a resemblance sufficiently close to the analogous experience of Augustine to account for the general likeness which exists between their systems of logical thought. Calvin found himself suddenly seized in the grip of an irresistible power, and was consciously as clay in the hand of a potter. With the *attribute of power* his system begins. He sees power working to an end; intelligent, therefore involving foreknowledge. But in knowledge there can be no element of contingency or uncertainty. The movements of the universe, therefore, from star to atom, are constrained within adamant lines of predestined order. That saving grasp had laid hold upon his life in the execution of an eternal decree. A decree equally inevitable necessitated the perdition of his neighbor. The holy are holy, and the sinful are sinful, alike by the ordination of God, and for his mere good pleasure. On this iron pathway of deduction Calvin walks with a step that is firm, fearless, unflinching. Within its lines he compels all facts; to its demands he conforms all Scripture. In his deductive method he seems consciously to possess an instrument which is applicable alike to temporals and eternal. He never thinks of making an induction. He has no idea of asking whether or no God may not be revealing himself in life and experience, and history and institutions; and if so, whether it might not be well to balance and modify the process of reasoning downward by reasoning sometimes in the contrary direction. One can scarcely avoid the thought, while following him, that he is making Scrip-

ture ancillary to his logic, instead of humbling his logic to the service of Scripture.

His law studies were now finished, and his father having died, he felt free to pursue his literary inclinations, and returned to Paris. He seems to have contemplated nothing more than the quiet, modest, studious life of a man of letters. But the man could not be hid. His immense erudition, and his distinguished career as a student of law, had already made him widely known. He had already been consulted, along with other continental scholars, concerning the validity of Henry VIII.'s marriage with Katherine.<sup>1</sup> The new doctrines were rife among the students of the French capital, and the only place where a man of his clear vision and new experience could stand was with the reformers. He became, by mere force of personal character and attainments, and without intent on his own part, their guide in thought and study, and their spiritual counselor. They crowded upon him in his retirement, so that, as he says, "My solitary place became like a public school." But the reforming interest was weak as yet in France, and at this time was undergoing great persecution; and on account of an act which, perhaps, evinced greater zeal than prudence on Calvin's part, he was speedily obliged to flee from Paris for his life. One of his friends was made rector of the university, and Calvin wrote for him his inaugural address. Instead of taking some literary or scholastic theme, he made it a vigorous defense of the reformed doctrine, especially justifica-

<sup>1</sup> In 1530, when twenty-one years of age, he wrote a letter upon the royal divorce, giving his opinion in favor of it, on the ground that the marriage was illegal as being within the degrees prohibited by Scripture. — Burnet, *Hist. Ref.*

tion by faith ; and so great was the wrath it aroused among the Sorbonists that both the author and the speaker were compelled to escape as best they could. Then follow two or three years of wandering, to Basle, to Saintonge, to Noyon, and finally into Italy ; during which period, nevertheless, he accomplishes a work which makes an epoch in theology, and for which he has been called "The Aristotle of the Reformation." "The Institutes of the Christian Religion" was called out in response to a royal calumny. Francis I., who was at this time persecuting violently the reformers of France, but who was desirous, while crushing the new doctrines, to keep on good terms with the reforming princes of Germany, gave out that his endeavors were directed against certain fanatics and subverters of social order like the Anabaptists. And Calvin simply undertakes to repel the mean aspersion. He has no thought of writing anything new or strange, anything original even. He simply undertakes to tell what the true Christian faith is now, what it was in the beginning, what it has always been. It is not peculiar to the reformers. He simply professes to gather up the truths which Christians of all ages had held, Augustine and Remigius, and Anselm and Luther. He binds them together in the adamantine chains of his logic, shows their consistency and correlation, and then dedicates it to his majesty Francis I. "This, your majesty, is what the reformers believe, whom you are persecuting, and we leave it now to your majesty, and to all the world, to say, whether we are Anabaptists and communists and rioters, or whether we are members of the true Church Catholic of all time."

A marvelous work, view it in what aspect we will !

Written by a young man twenty-five years of age, in an interval of his flittings as a proscribed wanderer; covering the whole ground of revealed truth, nothing wanting and nothing redundant; a system to which, during the remainder of his life, he added nothing, and from which he took nothing of material import; a system as compact, consistent, lucid, and unwasting as a cube of rock-crystal, and as hard and cold as that.

After a brief and stealthy visit to France for the purpose of taking a final farewell of his native country, he sets out for Basle, where he means to settle himself for a life of retirement and study. His life furnishes, at this point, a striking illustration of his favorite doctrine of divine decrees. Owing to the disturbed condition of the country, he cannot get to Basle by the ordinary route, and is compelled to go around by Geneva. He has arrived in the city in the afternoon of a summer day (1536), and goes to a quiet inn intending to refresh himself with a night's slumber and then proceed on his journey. It is at the time when the great preacher Farel finds himself so powerless amid the forces which he has aroused by his fiery and furious eloquence. Some one has recognized Calvin and reports his presence to Farel, who at once calls upon him, and compels him, as if by a prophet's word, to change all his plans, remain in Geneva, and help him in his work. There must have been something very awe-inspiring in the man who could sway and bend to his will such an iron character as Calvin's. He resists, pleads his desire for study, his unfitness, but without avail. He says that he was struck with terror by Farel's formidable obtestation,<sup>1</sup> and felt as

<sup>1</sup> "I denounce you in the name of Almighty God, and declare that if you pretend the love of study in such a case, you are

if the hand of the Almighty had been stretched out from heaven and laid upon him, and he was powerless to resist. And so the place, the hour, and the man, by the foreknowledge and predestination of God, through the instrumentality of human agency, are brought together.

The task which confronted Calvin at Geneva was an arduous one. He had been suddenly seized and thrust into a turbulent and stormy scene of social forces, and bidden to quell and harmonize them and set them in orderly working. "He desired to establish and promote Christian faith in accordance with his own views; to secure to the religious society which had been founded in virtue of that faith, on the one hand religious independence of state control, and on the other due authority and power in matters of religion over its members and faithful adherents; to reform public and private morality both in civil and religious society, in the name of the allied powers of church and state, and by their mutual help. Such," says the French philosopher Guizot,<sup>1</sup> "was the three-fold design which Calvin hoped to accomplish. No doubt he had not set it very distinctly before him, nor had he fully realized all that it involved and all its difficulties, but he commenced the struggle with a stout heart and a resolute mind." I question the distinguished philosopher's suggestion that Calvin's work did not lie very distinctly in his own mind. The man who had written the "Institutes" at twenty-five, and never was known to waver or hesitate in anything else

seeking your own things and not the things of Christ unless you become our fellow-laborer in this cause," were the impetuous words of Farel." — Beza, *Jo. Calv. Vita*.

<sup>1</sup> *St. Louis and Calvin*, pp. 216, 217.

through indistinct mental vision, knew from the first what he wanted to do, and how to proceed in doing it. He meant to establish in Geneva a province of the kingdom of God. So far as it was possible for him to get a controlling hand upon the affairs of the church and the state, he meant to govern both by the principles laid down in the Bible, as he, Calvin, understood those principles. He was at once appointed teacher of theology, and shortly afterward elected pastor. Together with Farel he drew up a confession of faith, or body of Christian belief, which was at once adopted by the city's representative council of two hundred, and by them ordered to be proclaimed as binding upon the whole body of citizens, — a city ordinance in fact. Some of these articles related not only to faith, but to practice, and were very radical. One of them related to the rite of excommunication and the limitation of the privileges of the Lord's Supper. These, together with stringent regulations concerning matters of social conduct, some of which were in themselves indifferent, were at once put into operation, and of course developed violent opposition. We all know that in nature, when motion is suddenly and sharply arrested, it is converted into heat; if the motion has been violent and the momentum is great, the heat is correspondingly great. And such was the result when a sudden and radical external reformation was imposed by edict upon the manners and morals of Geneva. A gay and pleasure-loving people were suddenly arrested in the practice of customs and the indulgence of gayeties to which they had long been used. Of course such repression as this caused a violent eruption of indignation. Many even of those who had been friends of the Reformation, and who themselves were modest



in demeanor and moderate in life, sided with those who deemed their personal liberties violated. Not without show of reason they charged Calvin and Farel with the design of establishing a new papacy ; and the speedy result was that Calvin and Farel were banished by a counter-edict from the city. Plainly, Geneva was not yet ready for the rule of the saints. So far from it, it was in danger of being lost to the reformed cause altogether. The detent was lifted as suddenly as it had been imposed by the expansive power of the suppressed and imprisoned forces ; a lesson which violent reformers, it would seem, can never learn but by costly or ruinous experience.

Things now (1538) became really worse than ever at Geneva. Disorder and irreligion grew riotous ; licentiousness and violence prevailed openly in the streets. To make matters still more hazardous for the reformed cause a most wily and politic servant of the Pope was watching matters from a little distance and waiting his opportunity. Cardinal Sadolet saw the chance now of restoring the papal authority. He writes a cautious, gentle, flattering letter to the Genevan senate, deploring the city's misfortunes, saying not a word in accusation of the banished ministers, and softly exploring the probabilities or possibilities of the city's restoration to the fold of the Old Church. Calvin has no thought or desire to return to Geneva. His time is passing pleasantly in the converse of scholars, — Bucer and Melancthon and the Saxon theologians, — in attendance upon councils, in study and writing, in preaching and lecturing in Strasburg ; but the wiles of the cardinal stir his indignation. Peppery as the little man is, and sensitive as to his banishment, he has an honest Christian desire in his heart for the

city's welfare and for the peace of the true reformers who are living there. And he writes an answer to Sadolet's feeler, which silences him forever. He reminds us of one of the little monitors of modern warfare, carrying a single gun, but swift and fierce and infallible, which steams for a few moments out from its hiding-place, and sinks the great '74 that disappears forever. For three years he is a banished man, and the three years do something for him and more for the city. He marries in a cool, logical, business-like way in the interval, and not much is to be said, because he himself never says much, of his domestic relations. He never wears his heart upon his sleeve for an hour, — scarcely puts it in sight. He will not take us into his intimacy nor let us love him. Many more tears have been shed under Calvin than were ever shed over him. But Geneva fares badly without him. Their political liberty has degenerated to the broadest license. There is no moral or civil restraint. The very syndics<sup>1</sup> themselves have proved powerless and worthless. Two of them perish by a violent death, the

<sup>1</sup> "The sovereign power in Geneva was vested in a series of three Councils: *First*, The General Council, composed of all such citizens and burgesses as had reached the age of twenty-five years. *Secondly*, The Council of Two Hundred, which consisted of two hundred and fifty citizens or burgesses, and had its vacancies filled up as soon as they amounted to fifty. The members were required to be thirty years of age, and held office for life, unless they became bankrupt, or were degraded at a censure annually passed. This Council generally met on the first Monday of every month. *Thirdly*, The Council of Twenty Five. Its members were chosen from the Council of Two Hundred, and were subject to the same scrutiny as the larger court. The *Syndics* or magistrates, four in number, were selected annually from the Council of Twenty Five, and were first chosen in the city about the year 1090. They continued in office for a year,

other two are exiled for malfeasance. Three years of anarchy and disorder have shown to all the good elements of the city's population their inherent weakness and inability to meet the riot and disaster and lawlessness of the time. A reactionary sentiment has been growing up in Calvin's favor. His disinterested letter to Cardinal Sadolet, so ready, so complete, so final in its efficacy, has warmed their hearts towards him. The little keen-eyed Frenchman, of clear grit and of iron soul, is the man who can bring order out of chaos and rule Geneva, and they call him back. Reluctantly he comes, this time to stay and to rule, until twenty-four years later he gives up his authority with his life.

It must be remembered that Calvin had had a double education, as a theologian and a lawyer, and that he had been equally eminent in both departments. There was the stuff in him for two distinct and thoroughly furnished men. And yet, while he was both a theologian and a lawyer, the two characters were merged and blended into a perfect unity. He was the most competent man of his time to be either at the head of church or state, or both. And in Geneva he was both. With the greatest enthusiasm and cordiality the structures of religion and of government were now committed to his hands, and he built them into one as the theologian and the jurist were combined in his own personality. He framed both the ecclesiastical order and the civil laws. He meant that both church and state, while preserving distinctness of function, "should be intimately connected and mutually coöperative for a common end,—the realization of the kingdom of God in the lives of the people. The and were not reëligible for four." — Rilliet, *Calvin and Servetus*.  
Note by Translator.

church was to infuse a religious spirit into the state; the state was to uphold and foster the interests of the church." The work of religion, in the maintenance of preachers and the instruction of the people and the training of the children, must be enforced by law, and if necessary secured by the intervention of the magistrate. Offenses against ecclesiastical order must be visited by civil penalties, even unto death. He draws up the Great Code of ecclesiastical and moral legislation which is to guide the ecclesiastical courts of consistory and council, and the whole people swear to it in a great assembly. It enters minutely into all the affairs of life. It takes the Genevan in his cradle, and does not desert him till he is in his grave. It attends him on his wedding day, and dictates the affairs of his domestic life. It controls his food, his dress, his amusements, his labor, the gifts he shall bestow, the expenses he shall incur, the outfit of his christening, his bridal, and his funeral.<sup>1</sup>

The life-long work of administration upon which Calvin had entered was enough to have engaged the energies even of such a man as himself, had there been nothing but administrative work for him to do. With his genius for both comprehensiveness and detail, he watches and shapes the minutest legislation, even to the watching the city gates, the order of the streets, the suppression of fires. At the same time he is preaching every day every other week, and three days in every week lecturing on theology. He must be every week in the consistory and preside over its deliberations. Besides all this, he writes commentaries upon the whole of Scripture — witness the fifty stout volumes that bear his name upon the shelves of our

<sup>1</sup> Tulloch, *Luther and other Leaders*, p. 206.

libraries. His correspondence is varied and unceasing. "I have not time," he writes to a friend, "to look out of my house at the blessed sun, and if things continue thus I shall forget how it looks. When I have settled my usual business, I have so many letters to write, so many questions to answer, that many a night is spent without any offering of sleep being brought to nature."<sup>1</sup>

And it must not be supposed that Calvin's triumphant return and reëstablishment in Geneva insured him a peaceful enjoyment of his authority. The old libertine forces were not expelled. There were many in Geneva who said that it was better to live in hell with Beza than in heaven with Calvin. One can scarcely wonder even at this grim preference, as he reads of divers applications of the reformer's legislation. A barber is arrested and imprisoned for dressing a bride's hair in flowing tresses, and the bride's mother and friends, who have aided and abetted the barber, are treated in the same manner. Dancing and card-playing are put under the ban and made penal offenses; all holidays are abolished, except Sunday. "These things," said Calvin, "are not wrong in themselves, but they have been so abused that it is the wisest way to abrogate them altogether." There were to be no more feasting and revels at weddings. All the lighter follies and amusements of society were to be abolished. Of course all the darker vices of licentiousness and debauchery, and drunkenness and pro-

<sup>1</sup> Among the MSS. of Calvin in the Library of Geneva is a fasciculus, with the title: "Lettres par divers Rois, Princes, Seigneurs, et Dames pour consulter sur les cas de conscience epineaux, ou pour le remercier de ses ouvrages."—Tweedie, *Calvin and Servetus*, p. 45.

fanity, were summarily dealt with. The penalties were severe, in many cases out of all proportion to the offenses to which they were attached. Parental authority was defended with exceeding rigor: a little girl was beheaded for striking her mother; a boy who only threatened the same unfilial act was condemned to death. A young child was ordered to be whipped for singing some silly words to a Psalm tune; and a man who, hearing an ass bray, said, "What a fine Psalm he chants to be sure!" was banished from the city. And so on. Calvin made the mistake, which was not the mistake of his age only, but which has been repeated again and again by men who suppose that some temporary and stringent regulations, imposed upon a rude people in far off and ignorant ages, may be taken as the divinely authorized and perpetual regulations of all human society; who deem that there has been no advance from Judaism to Christianity; who think that the Old Testament, equally with the New, is to be adopted and enforced as the law of life.

Such a rule of rigid morals was not to be permanently enforced without the utmost toil and conflict and watchfulness. To hold a city of twenty thousand inhabitants — volatile, restless, made up of very diverse elements — under the Mosaic code, notwithstanding the palpable blessings of order and good morals, was a more than Herculean task. And Calvin did it. No other man since Moses's day has ever accomplished it on such a scale.

Apart from all this, there is one aspect of Calvin's life which looms upon us in the retrospect with a lurid and awful grandeur which chills our blood and makes us wish that the story might here come to an end. And yet it was inevitable that he should play his part

in the fierce conflicts of his day as a controversialist. As such, he did a work both good and bad, to be forever praised and forever regretted. His peculiar doctrines of predestination and election were challenged then as they are now, sometimes seriously, sometimes recklessly and maliciously, sometimes by scholars not to be ignored, sometimes by fanatics and wild enthusiasts, to whom his best response would have been silence. His controversies with Bolsec and Castellio and Fabri and Westphal, and especially with Bullinger and Melancthon, we may pass by, but the world will still hold that Calvin burned Servetus. Let me tell the horrible story as briefly and ingenuously as possible.

Michael Servetus was a Spaniard, born in the same year with Calvin, 1509, a physician of considerable renown, who had achieved great success in his profession in France, who seems to have anticipated Harvey in his conjecture of the circulation of the blood, and who, like many men of large success, had a large endowment of vanity and self-conceit. With not a very well balanced mind, he proposed to himself, when hardly twenty-one, the task of reforming the world upon the subject of the Trinity. Long years before his final conflict with Calvin, he had challenged him, while at Paris, to discuss the subject, and when Calvin appeared in readiness, Servetus declined the encounter. Calvin, no doubt, was then disgusted with his cowardice. For twenty years now Servetus had led a roving sort of life, and during that time had been aspersing Calvin as a theologian and as a man. Moreover, he had played the hypocrite meantime; for, after having published his book concerning Trinitarian errors, he received the hospitalities of the

Archbishop of Vienne, who befriended him as a patron of literature, and while with him professed to be a true churchman. For more than twenty years, indeed, while under the archbishop's patronage, he conformed to the Catholic Church and attended mass, unsuspected of heresy by his patron. And during this very time, under assumed names, he was publishing his books, and even bribing the archbishop's own printer to print them for him. At length, through evidence which was afforded by Calvin, he was discovered ; his hypocrisy was detected, the archbishop was informed, and Servetus was arrested and put on trial. He denied the authorship of his books, swore he had not written on the errors of the Trinity, and when the documents from Calvin were put in evidence, and he found that conviction was inevitable, he managed to escape from his jailer, and the court at Vienne was compelled to be content with burning his effigy and seizing and confiscating what little property he had left behind.

And now what does the poor, condemned, banned, and foolish wanderer do but deliberately thrust his head into the lion's mouth ! What hallucination turns his footsteps straight to the gates of Geneva ? There he takes lodging, and tarries for a month in a little inn just by the city gate, under the almost omniscient inspection of Calvin's eye ; of course Calvin's eye detects him, and the master of Geneva has him arrested and brought to trial. He is wily, he is acute, he is sometimes abusive ; he caricatures Calvin and his doctrines ; his opinions are wild and fanatical, and out of keeping with any recognized philosophy ; he descends to the most abusive personalities against Calvin ; calls him pitiful wretch, disciple of Simon Magus, a liar, and



even a murderer. And it must be confessed that Calvin is not far behind him in his retorts. Servetus is an obscene dog, a perfidious villain, and the reformer publicly devotes him to eternal fire. And so for two months it goes on, reminding us of the pitiful Guiteau case, and leaving us in the same dismal state of questioning whether the man is fool or knave, or both. And yet the man is honest in his central conviction that the doctrine of the Trinity as presented by Calvin is false. He adheres to that even to the latest words he speaks. At length he is condemned to the doom of heretics in that day, and on the morning after is led out and chained up to the stake, and out of the curling flames his last words rise to heaven, we may be sure not unheard or unheeded, — “Jesus, thou Son of the Eternal God, have mercy upon me!”

Why try to excuse the crime? Why multiply discussion upon the matter? Why try to save the honor of an ecclesiastical idol now, three hundred years after Calvin has seen the matter as it was in the light of God? Calvin does not excuse it now; why should we? Calvin, with all his greatness, and all his goodness, and all his logic, was human — scarcely humane. I cannot make much of the fact that his very hands did not lay the fagots; that he tried to have the mode of Servetus’s execution changed; that the case of Servetus was already stirring up a party against Calvin in Geneva; that it was the method of the day, with all religious parties, to burn for heresy; that Melancthon and Bullinger, and the gentlest of the reformers, gave their sanction to the deed. Make much of all this who will, and apologize for it who may, that I believe in Calvinism high or low, broad or narrow, does not devolve upon me any responsibility for Calvin’s

crime. And crime it was, under the most favorable treatment of the subject.

I am not sure that it is not a blessing to us in these later times that Calvin had so large a hand in the burning of Servetus. Let it remind us that logic is not religion, though Calvin was religious. Let it prove to us that system may exist, and yet the very soul of pure and undefiled truth may not be held in its meshes; that men may get out of their interpretation of the Bible, however well concatenated and consistent, false deductions as to duty and life.

In fact, the weakness of Calvinism lies at the point of this suggestion, for it has a great weakness notwithstanding all its magnificent strength and superb proportions. There are some regions over which logic cannot be supreme, which, indeed, it cannot enter. Its conclusions do not hold in the realm of love, of faith, of penitence, of prayer, of adoration, and of hope. In that border land where the finite meets the Infinite, where time touches eternity, where the Spirit of God and the spirit of man transact,—at that point where the Father falls upon the neck of his child and kisses him, dialectics cease. Man has other faculties besides those of the understanding, which are at least coördinate with it in their authority. They must play their part in the interpretation of the divine utterances, and must be honored by us even as God has honored them in his Word and in his ways. Nor can any one man, or any one age, interpret God for all men and all ages. Neither Augustine, nor Calvin, nor any of their successors, has been empowered to say, "*My interpretations are ultimate and infallible.*" St. Paul has intimated that a time is coming when even that of which we now boast as *knowledge* will pass away. "Other

foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Augustine, Remigius, Anselm, Luther, Calvin, may do their work in adding to the glorious pile; but let no man dare to say, the temple of truth has been witnessed in its perfection by these eyes, and carried by this hand to its completion.

Calvin's life continued but little longer, — a few years of wasting toil but of impetuous energy, of tireless work in preaching, teaching, reading, writing, governing, till he sank out of life, as Beza says, with the setting sun, on May 27, 1564, in his fifty-fifth year. No man is certain of the place where his body lies, but the sun never sets upon his monument.

## X.

### COLIGNY.

A. D. 1517-1572.

OPPOSITION is the best *mordant* to fix the color of your thought in the general belief. — DR. O. W. HOLMES, *Border-Lines*.

AVENGE, O Lord, thy slaughter'd saints, whose bones  
Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold;  
Ev'n them who kept thy truth so pure of old,  
When all our fathers worship'd stocks and stones,  
Forget not: in thy book record their groans  
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold  
Slain by the bloody Piemontese that roll'd  
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans  
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they  
To Heav'n. Their martyr'd blood and ashes sow  
O'er all th' Italian fields, where still doth sway  
The triple tyrant; that from these may grow  
A hundred fold, who having learned thy way  
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.  
MILTON'S Sonnet, *On the late Massacre in Piemont*.



## X.

### COLIGNY.

A. D. 1517-1572.

A RECENT writer<sup>1</sup> upon the present religious condition of France says: "The French are a people of interest. Their qualities of mind, their susceptibility to great suggestions, their quick apprehension of ideas, the irresistible fascination which seizes them when under great impulses, their ardor and enthusiasm, are characteristics which command consideration. . . . They communicate earnestly what they think and feel. They have a spirit of aggression. They have never failed to put their stamp upon the times and things with which they have to do." The French character, a compound, in the main, of Celtic and Teutonic elements, doubtless presents these as its most obvious and impressive features. They appear prominently at every stage of the national history. This susceptibility to great suggestions, this fascination under grand impulses, this aggressive enthusiasm for communicating what they think and feel, go far in accounting for the great civil and social upheavals which have marked their history, and for the sudden and radical changes which have repeatedly taken place in their government. They go far, likewise, in

<sup>1</sup> Rev. Dr. A. F. Beard, of the American Chapel, Paris, in *Andover Review*, January, 1884.

accounting for the strong and permanent hold with which certain notions are rooted in the French mind, and for their perpetual recurrence in French history. An idea is firmly held as it is clearly grasped, whether by an individual or a community; and so, with Frenchmen, a great idea is easy to start, and correspondingly hard to kill. This assertion is abundantly verified by the history of the reformed religion in France. Its beginnings were rapid, its enemies were powerful and determined, the forces which were bent upon its extinction were manifold and rigorous. And yet, for three hundred years, it has survived, under persecutions which have been nowhere else so injurious, and under outrages which have been nowhere else so malignant. In the beginning of the sixteenth century France seemed likely to take the lead of the Reformation in Europe. Five years before Luther posted his theses in Wittenberg, Faber had put forth at Paris his commentaries on St. Paul's Epistles, in which the chief Lutheran doctrines were clearly defended, and had said to his pupil, Farel, "God will renovate the world, and you will be a witness of it." Indeed, far back of this time, there were lingering in the south and southeast of France remnants of the old Albigenses, and of the Vaudois, who for centuries had held to the simple truths of the gospel, in opposition to the corruptions of Rome; who, if they were not indeed the immediate inheritors of the purity of the primitive apostolic church, at least may be said to have led the way of all others in emancipation from papal thralldom. Their origin is uncertain.<sup>1</sup> Peter Waldo, so far from being their

<sup>1</sup> Within the first two centuries Christianity had extended to Lyons.

founder, more probably derived his name from them.<sup>1</sup> For a thousand years, in the valleys of the Alps, they realized the vision of the Hebrew prophet, of a bush that was burned with fire and yet not consumed.

As early as 1512, Jacques Le Fèvre d'Étaples, or, by his Latin name, Faber Stapulensis, who had studied in Florence while Savonarola was preaching there, by his biblical studies became convinced of the necessity of reform in the life of the Church. This man, profoundly versed in the new learning, and as deeply impressed by the spiritual needs of the time, became the patriarch of the French Reformation. He drew to his instruction two men who became sympathetic and powerful helpers. The one was that William Farel, who, as we saw in the last lecture, started the work in Geneva, and fixed Calvin there as his successor. The other was William Briçonnet, who shortly became Bishop of Meaux. In these three men it seemed, for a time, as if there were a threefold cord, not to be quickly broken: Faber, the scholar, who could write and defend the new opinions; Farel, the fiery and enthusiastic preacher, who could put Faber's work in a popular and forceful way; and Briçonnet, the bishop, who, with his ecclesiastical authority and influence, could further and defend the efforts of both. The see of Meaux, it would seem, might have become the Wittenberg of France. It had its Elector Frederic in Briçonnet, its Melancthon in Faber, its Luther in Farel. But, alas! one strand of the cord was weak. Bishop Briçonnet, wanting the courage to maintain his convictions against charges of heresy which were made against him, turned about, and even acquiesced

<sup>1</sup> *The Israel of the Alps*, by Alexis Muston, translated by William Hazlitt, ch. i.



in the persecution which was instituted in his diocese. Farel, as we have seen, was driven to Geneva, and Faber betook himself to the court of the good Margaret of Navarre.

But a great work had already been accomplished, even before Briçonnet's defection ; a work which was destined to fill, with its record of undying faith, and quenchless courage, and knightly honor, and unmeasured sorrow, the bloodiest page of history. Faber and Farel had set on foot a movement which for a long time was to make its own way without human patronage, and with little of human leadership. Faber had given the people the New Testament in their own language. Tracts and handbills containing portions of the Bible were scattered abroad in great numbers. About this time arose a singer, who helped the cause mightily, — "the Robert Burns of his day," — who, without any great degree of piety, could write with equal ease a religious hymn, a popular ballad, or a stinging satire. Clement Marot wrote poetry for the profligate Diana of Poitiers, directed his squibs against the Sorbonists ; better than all, translated the Psalms of David into rhymes which soon all Paris and all France were singing. It even became the fashion to sing them at court. The king sang the 47th Psalm — "Like as the hart doth pant and bray" — for a hunting song. Each courtier had his favorite Psalm. The nobles sang them in their castles, the workmen at their toil. Charles V. rewarded the poet for his Psalms with a purse of two hundred doubloons. The more violent among the papists tried to suppress them. One translated the Odes of Horace into French, and set them to music, hoping to supplant Marot ; but his work fell dead. The Psalms, for a time,

crowded out the ribald songs of the street. What the fashionable world sang for fashion's sake, the humble vine-dressers in the valleys sang for the sake of the light, and comfort, and peace it brought to their souls. Clement Marot did as great a work for Huguenoterie, in its infancy, as Charles Wesley did two hundred and fifty years afterwards for Methodism. A Romish historian wrote: "The wise world, stupidly wise in this, which judges of things by the outward appearance only, praised this sort of amusement, not seeing that under this chant, or rather new enchantment, a thousand pernicious novelties crept into their souls."<sup>1</sup> We saw, too, in the last lecture, how at this time Calvin, while a student in Paris, was disseminating the reformation truth, and how people came in throngs to his study to hear him expound the Scriptures.

It was thus, in a great variety of ways, that the truth gained a footing in France. It was as if some great invisible hand were stretched down out of heaven to scatter the seed broadcast. It fell in all sorts of strange places, no one could tell how. There was no recognizable human leader; the movement was carried on privately. There was nowhere any organization; for half a century there was no form, no church, no discipline, no creed. A few men came together here and there, "in fields, gardens, barns, no matter where. Their preachers," says a satirist of the time, "were butchers, bricklayers, publicans, and other venerable doctors of that sort." The night was the most frequent time of their assemblage. Their sexton and bell-ringer was often a boy who

<sup>1</sup> Florimond de Remond, quoted by White, *St. Bartholomew*, p. 49, English edition.

would pass through the street whistling a tune, as our boys in Boston now call their mates to the evening rendezvous. Or a careless string would be hung from a window, insignificant to all but those who knew the token. That French susceptibility to grand ideas, that fascination under great impulses, that enthusiasm for communicating what they think and feel, so characteristic of the French nature, were supplying the lack of form and organization. Men were held together by the invisible bond of a grand thought, — the idea which had seized them severally and held them as one, — that priestcraft, and pretense, and churchly arrogance were all to be swept away, and to exist no longer as barriers to interpose between the individual soul of man and the face and favor of his God. And so for fifty years, with no other organization than this, Huguenoterie was gathering through all France. For a long time the summer showers that fall upon the slopes of a hundred hills may be kept apart; they may trickle and wander through a thousand dark crevices, and secret conduits, and obscure ravines, through water-ways that seem to have no common outlet; but the principle of gravity is in every drop, and the hour of union, soon or late, is at length inevitable.

But the church which was thus gathering under its invisible leadership was subjected to bitter persecution. If the flame of its life was continually fed by oil from hidden conduits, it was no less constantly threatened with extinction by floods of oppression. Francis I., who held the throne of France from 1515 to 1547, pursued a very crooked and inconsistent, not to say self-contradictory, course towards the Reformation; at one time tolerating it, at another persecuting

its followers without mercy. His policy was of the sort which cries alternately good Lord and good devil. It was to him, when, afraid of offending the German princes on one hand, and yet of offending the ultramontanism of Spain on the other, he persecuted the Protestants upon the plea that they were robbers and Anabaptists, that Calvin wrote that sharp dedication of his "Institutes." A monarch utterly without independence of mind, veering in his course according to the policy of the hour. The later part of his reign particularly was signalized by various edicts of extreme severity, under which men were hunted to the death like hares. Whole villages were swept out of existence. At one time, week followed week of continuous slaughter, until, in less than two months, twenty-two towns and villages were utterly destroyed, four thousand men and women were slain, and seven hundred were sent to the galleys. A witness wrote, "I saw in one church between four and five hundred poor women and children butchered." Barns were burned filled with refugees who had retreated to them for hiding. Some fled into caves, and were suffocated by fires kindled at the entrances. And yet the religion, without a name and without a church, lived on. Did I not say truly, that with Frenchmen a great idea is easy to start, but hard to kill?

Then came the reign of Henry II. (for twelve years, 1547-1559), with Catherine de Medicis for his queen, Diana of Poitiers for his mistress, and the Guises for his counselors and bosom friends, — names all of them to send a thrill of horror through the most callous and passionless stoicism. If Francis I. had ever wavered and shown himself mercifully inclined towards Protestantism, his son could be accused of no such weak-

ness. His little finger was thicker than his father's loins. His reign began with rigor. He meant to consolidate his kingdom by compelling all men to think in one way. All right to property was taken away from heretics by edict (1551), no plea was allowed them in the courts, they were denied the right of petition to king or Parliament. And yet in this reign it was that the scattered elements came together and compacted themselves into a church, the Reformed Church of France. The fierce determination to annihilate heresy aroused it and brought it to bay. It stood up and declared itself, and was surprised at its own strength. It began to gather into itself some new elements. It was not only the humble and the poor who now allied themselves with its fortunes. Men and women of wealth, lawyers, bankers, merchants, were drawn to the hated doctrines. They had their secret votaries even in the court. Calvin's "Institutes" had been written for men of thought, and miserable a coadjutor as Erasmus had personally turned out to the cause of the Reformation, his satires still had their power. Huguenoterie was speedily to develop into a mighty political force. It could do something beside sing the psalms of Marot. It had hands and feet, and could march and fight when the man should appear to marshal and command its energies. The man was getting ready, and the hour was drawing nigh.

The actual organization of the reformed churches began in a very simple and beautiful way. The theoretical question has often been debated, whether, if a company of men were cast away upon some desert island without priest or minister, any true church with valid ordinances could be formed. That hypothetical question was a practical one in Paris in the year

1555, which is the date of the first organization of the Huguenots. It was in this wise. A child was born to a noble Frenchman in whose house a little company of Protestants were accustomed to meet secretly for religious worship. Drawn together in such tender sympathies as proscribed people always are, they rejoiced in the joy of the household over the cradle of the little child. "But how," said the father to his friends, "shall it be consecrated to God in baptism? I am unwilling to have the popish rites performed over it. I cannot carry it away into Geneva or Germany. We need a church and the sacraments for ourselves and our children. Why may we not form a church, and elect a pastor from among ourselves? Surely there are those among us who are godly enough and learned enough." Strange that it had not been suggested before in all that fifty years! Some among them were still afraid to entertain the proposal lest it should subject them to new and fiercer persecution. But they talked about it, prayed and fasted over it, and finally acceded to it. They cast their votes for one who should be their pastor, and one name was on all the ballots. In the same way they chose a certain number to be elders and deacons. And so was constituted the first church of the Huguenots, Christian, apostolic, and, so far as external polity was concerned, democratic. From that time the scattered Protestants throughout France became Huguenots in reality, as they were in name, *eidgenossen*, confederates. "They were organized," says Beza, "according to the example of the Church in primitive times." In less than three years from this time, so rapid was the movement towards organization, there were two thousand regular congregations of reformed worshipers scattered over France,

numbering four hundred thousand persons. And one year later (May, 1559) so strong were they that they ventured to hold a general synod, adopt a confession of faith, and settle their national organization.

We have thus traced, in barest outline, the history of the Huguenots during the period of their suppression. They are now an organized and significant power in the state. As such their history may best be followed by tracing that of a single man, — a man who was the first and greatest leader of the Huguenots, in whom the reform found its best representative, whether as a social, political, or spiritual force; who was recognized at home and abroad as its head and its heart, at whom all its enemies struck, in whom all its friends confided, and who was the first and most prominent victim in that Bartholomew massacre, which annihilated the power, though it could not crush the spirit, of the Reformed Church of France.

Gaspard de Coligny, Marquis of Chatillon, was born February 16, 1517, the year of Luther's theses, at Chatillon-sur-Loing. He was of a house whose members had been concerned in the great movements of France for five hundred years. His father had taken lessons from Chevalier Bayard, had been grand marshal under Francis I., and was one of the chieftains on the Field of the Cloth of Gold. His mother was Louise de Montmorenci, proudest of all the names of the old French nobility. Admiral Coligny thus represented in himself the finest product of ancient chivalry taken up and glorified by Christianity. He stands at a singular crisis in history. Feudalism was just dying out, Renovated Religion was just coming in along with the Renaissance, and the forces of all three were confluent in this man's character, as they were

found, probably, in no other of his age. Such a conjunction in any other age would have been impossible from the nature of the case. As a representative of the old chivalry, he was a most perfect, gentle knight. He seems to have been the last consummate flower produced by the stalk before it died down forever, at least in France, as perhaps Sir Philip Sidney was in England, who was contemporary with him.<sup>1</sup> All that blood untainted by dishonor or by vice, breeding the most scrupulous and delicate, the refinements of a home that had grown up into a nursery for his infancy, through long generations of brave and pure ancestors, and that had been adorned by as many generations of gracious and lovely motherhood, — all that this could do, had its outcome in Gaspard de Coligny. In addition to this, his boyhood had the advantages of the revival of letters. He had come of a race of warriors who could carve their way well enough with the sword, and bear down their antagonists in the tournament with the lance, but who could do little more than make their mark with the pen. But Gaspard and his brothers had a generous tuition in languages and philosophy, added to the training of the court and the field. And then, to crown and complete the whole, his childhood received a fine spiritual culture from his mother, Louise de Montmorenci, who was left a widow when Gaspard was but five years old. Madame de Chatillon had been among the few ladies at the royal court, of high rank, whose hearts were pure, and whose lives were absolutely free from scandal. She sympathized heartily with the new spirit

<sup>1</sup> Sir Philip Sidney was in Paris when the massacre of St. Bartholomew took place, and narrowly escaped being one of its victims.



of religious reform. She carefully secured for her children tutors of a like mind, so that the education which they received developed the fine combination of the heroic, the courtly, the scholarly, and the spiritual. And in Gaspard the balance of these seems to have been as nearly perfect as in any character that greets us from the page of history. He was as brave as he was courtly, as scholarly as brave, as devout and spiritual as scholarly, and withal of good temper and good sense. No character of modern history seems to me so nearly to resemble him as our own Washington, — a character of whom even those who were his enemies have nothing to say save what is good. Brantôme, who fought against him and the Huguenots, says: "Chatillon was prodigiously learned and eloquent; he understood and spoke Latin well; he had both studied and read; was always reading when not engaged in affairs; he was a lord of honor; a man of goodness, sage, mature, well-advised, politic, and brave; a censor and weigher of things, loving honor and virtue." Francis of Guise, but two years younger, was the friend and intimate of his youth, and the two have been often compared, destined as they were in after years to become the popular champions of two great parties; the name of Guise becoming the watchword and war-cry of the Papists, as that of Coligny was of the Huguenots. They looked alike; in early days seemed to feel and think alike; but the one developed the devil, the other the saint. "The one was ambitious, selfish, crafty; the other ingenuous, frank, open-hearted; the one made religion serve his own purposes; the other served the cause of religion with a faith that was heroic, and with aims that imparted a grandeur even to his failures."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Blackburn.

At the age of twenty-six he enters fully upon the profession of arms. He is seen upon the fields of Italy, Lorraine, Flanders, and Northern France, always loyal, and never weighing his life against the interests of his king. Indeed, to the very last, when king and court at times are ready to hew him in pieces or burn him at the stake, it is avowedly the highest interest of king and country that forms his most sacred motive. He is a most fearless knight. Summoned home from the siege of Luxembourg by his granduncle Montmorenci, on a plea of important matters that demand immediate attention, he finds it to be only a pretext to get a favorite nephew out of danger, is indignant at being thrust into the false position of apparent cowardice, and hastens back to the scene of death. Wounded fearfully in the trenches, yet fighting on, he is forced by his commander to retire. His throat is torn open by a musket ball, and the surgeon thinks he will bleed to death; but only ten days will he be forced to keep his tent, and then, against the protests of his superiors, takes the field anew. The king discovers that he has no man like this Chatillon to command an enterprise of danger or of delicacy; sends him upon commissions of policy or of hazard,—now to quell a revolt in Rochelle, then to relieve the army in Italy, again to defend the garrison at Boulogne. And yet the man has no love for fighting; never was a more peace-loving soul. Conflict for conflict's sake is his abhorrence from first to last. Even those plays at warfare in the tilt-yard and the tournament have for him no fascination. The tournament was the fashionable prize-fight of that age. It was the form of brutal entertainment that was popular with kings and princes and the lords and ladies of

the courts. To Coligny it was as barbarous, hideous, disgraceful as are the contests of the prize-ring to-day to the friends of the society for the prevention of cruelty.

In 1547, when he is thirty years of age, he marries Charlotte de Laval, a marriage attended with results of signal importance to Coligny, to the Huguenots, to France, to the Church of Christ, and doubtless to us here and now.

As if fortune were intent upon heaping all her favors upon him at once, he soon after receives a summons from his king,<sup>1</sup> who says, "For your bravery everywhere, your superior discipline, your meritorious services at Cerisola and Boulogne, I confer upon you another order of knighthood. Receive the collar of my order of St. Michael." A few days after another summons, this time to no empty decoration, but to substantial service, which he relished better: "I appoint you colonel-general of the French Infantry." He is not a Huguenot yet, far less a leader of the Huguenots, only the best young officer in the army of the King of France; but see how God is preparing the man for the work which lies hidden before him. I have already shown you how the work was gradually being prepared for the man; this is how the man was being prepared for his work. The work and the man will soon be brought together, and that young wife at home in the castle, Charlotte de Laval, will have something to do with it. With his new commission Coligny goes to the camp, and straightway the man puts *himself* into the whole army. It is a motley crew. Here are troops of foreign mercenaries, who care far less for the victories of war than for plunder

<sup>1</sup> Henry II.

and rioting. There is little order in the camp or in the field. The men are idle, dissipated, profane, swearing in all the languages of the continent. They are debauchees at rest, brigands on the march. Coligny will have no such disorder; a soldier, if not a Christian, should at least be a gentleman. Profanity shall be abolished; for the first offense he awards eight days in prison, on bread and water; for the second, the *amende honorable*, in the shirt and upon the knees; for the third, the hand to be struck off. And the swearing ceases. There shall be no more quarrels among men, or duels between officers. Whatever a soldier takes shall be taken only by permission, and scrupulously paid for. The honor of woman shall be respected; whoever insults or attacks a woman shall be hanged or strangled to death. They thought at first that the law would prove a dead letter, but it was carried out. "This offender," said they, "lives in your own town, under the walls of your own castle: will you punish him?" "All the more for that; he knows that I mean what I say." When the order was once established its beneficence was seen and acknowledged. Coligny's own regiment was to be depended upon for any service of unusual hazard. The towns through which he marched, or in whose neighborhood he encamped, felt secure. His men became a legion that would start to their feet at his call. An old writer,<sup>1</sup> not a Huguenot nor a friend to the Huguenots, says that Coligny's rules preserved the lives of millions of persons, to say nothing of their goods and property. He was thus the inventor of modern military discipline. He, more than any other man, made the soldier even of to-day. He was the first to make honor the condition of wearing the uniform.

<sup>1</sup> Brantôme.

My limits will not allow me to detail the career through which Coligny rose to the highest point of court favor. He was, of course, the object of abuse, suspicious, envies, jealousies, as every true man must be on such a path. In 1552 he is made, at thirty-five years of age, Admiral of France. In 1556 he is sent by his king, Henry II., to negotiate the treaty of Vaucelles with Philip of Spain.<sup>1</sup> The truce agreed upon is to last for five years. It is a truce not favorable to the Pope, because it binds Henry not to interfere with the Spanish operations in Italy. But Diana of Poitiers and the Guises and the Pope know how to manipulate Henry, and they compel him to break the truce before a single year has passed by. And so in a few short months Coligny sees his peace-making work at an end, and true to his king, though the king is false to himself, he is again in the field. And now comes that famous siege of St. Quentin, which you can best read, or rather see like a picture, in the pages of Motley and Prescott.<sup>2</sup> Coligny holds the town for three weeks against an overwhelming force. The delay saves Paris, but the fortunes of war are against Coligny, and he is made a prisoner. It was just at this time that that little Huguenot Church first formed in Paris was holding its meetings, and other churches were springing into organic life all over the kingdom. Coligny held back that Spanish army just long enough to keep it from sweeping through France and blotting the new little churches all out of existence. He was

<sup>1</sup> See Prescott's *Philip II.*, book i., ch. v.

<sup>2</sup> It was the capture of that city upon St. Lawrence's Day in memory of which Philip built the Escorial. For the story of the siege vide Prescott, *Philip II.*, book i., ch. vii. ; Motley, *Dutch Republic*, part i., ch. ii.

even then working for the great cause without knowing at the time how great a service he was rendering. But he is now drawing into a closer relation to the proscribed and hated people. Shut up for months in a Flemish prison, his Bible is his constant companion. His brother Andelot sends him books which let in more and more of the new light. Calvin knows the kindly religious influences under which he has been trained, and writes him. It leads to correspondence. All the best men and women whom he knows favor the Huguenots ; he is more than half a Huguenot himself. But if he goes over, what will it cost him ? The favor of his king, and the extinction of any hopes which he may have cherished of further preferment. It will bring him into constant suspicion, perhaps into persecution. Hitherto he had made a compromise with himself. He had believed, along with Erasmus, that the Church might be reformed from within. His father and uncles had never broken with the old Church. But he sees now that the compromise cannot be honestly maintained. The next year, after all these months of thought and reading and prayer, he is released upon the payment of the heavy price of fifty thousand crowns for his liberty. Doubtless he counts it light for the joy of getting back to his dear old castle home of Chatillon, and to his wife and the child that has been born to them.

One evening after his return he is walking with his wife under the open sky under the castle tower, and she says to him : " How wonderful that you should have been blest in your captivity with the knowledge of the truth ! And now why do you not publicly avow your faith and have a chaplain with us, preaching in the castle and the little towns about us ? "

"Perhaps I might not hold out if I were subjected to persecution, and you, in your sorrows and sufferings, would entreat me to yield at the expense of faith and honor."

"Indeed, you should never be tempted thus by me. I would be crushed to nothing a thousand times rather than see you deny Christ."

"This, then, is the last cable that holds me. I know the tortures which the Protestants are compelled to endure. Whoever makes a public profession of the Huguenot faith in France is likely to be seized and burned, and his property confiscated to the king. If I were alone in the world this would not deter me. If you are prepared with faith and courage to undergo what is common to others, I will not be wanting in my duty. There shall be a family altar, a chaplain in our castle, a church growing up in our town, a gospel preached to the poor. I will be a Huguenot."

"And the joys beyond all these! The glories of the eternal heavens!" whispered Charlotte de Chatillon. Noble man and woman! And how nobly was the promise kept by them both until Charlotte's death, and by her husband until the terrible day of St. Bartholomew!

One day not long afterwards, the good knight of Chatillon and his wife were in the little Huguenot congregation in the neighborhood when the Lord's Supper was to be celebrated. As the service was about to begin Coligny arose, and said, "I beseech the congregation not to take offense at my weakness, but to believe me sincere and pray for me, when I ask the minister to explain the Lord's Supper a little more fully."

All were astonished. The minister, in a few simple words, responded to the request; and the great admiral, never before so great as now, when clothed with the simplicity of a little child, arose again, and said:

"Permit me, brethren, to return thanks to God for this instruction, and to the pastor who has given it so patiently. God sparing me, I shall seek to receive the communion on the first day hereafter when it is administered in my parish."

"Why not now?" said the pastor.

"I have not made yet so public a profession of my faith as I ought."

"You are making it now. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Saviour and Intercessor for fallen man? Do you agree with us in the doctrines which the Scriptures teach, as far as you know them?"

"Most sincerely I do," said the admiral.

"Then, in the name of my Lord and my brethren, I invite you to this table, unless the elders think that our usual rules should be strictly observed."

"By no means let us debar one of the Lord's disciples, for it is His table, and not ours," said a venerable elder. "Where the spirit of the Lord is there is liberty."<sup>1</sup>

And so the great Admiral Coligny crowned the best honors that his king could bestow by becoming a Huguenot, and taking to himself the higher allegiance to the King of kings, — an allegiance in which he was as brave and true a knight, as unflinching a soldier, as stainless in his spiritual honor, as he had ever been in the service of Francis or of Henry.

From this time Coligny became inevitably the head

<sup>1</sup> Blackburn, *Coligny*, etc., *Cornaton's Memoirs*.



of the Huguenots. It could not have been otherwise. The cause had been growing for the man and the man for the cause, and when the hour struck the twain were wedded in a union which only St. Bartholomew's awful day saw terminated.

It was my object in this lecture to give only the history of the rise and first development of the Reformed Church of France. I can therefore do nothing more than outline the remainder of the story.

It was this same year, 1559, that Francis II. came to the throne, a boy of sixteen, who was married to Mary, Queen of Scots, the niece of the Guises. This brought that hated family more than ever into power, and they instituted measures for the speedy extinction of heresy throughout the kingdom. One of these brothers controlled the army; the other was put at the head of the treasury. Coligny was retired from office, and for a time lived quietly at Chatillon. But the Huguenots were now beginning to feel their associated power. Executions of popular favorites who adhered to the reformed opinions, and more especially the slaughter at Amboise,<sup>1</sup> so far from depressing them seemed to fire their courage. They dared to hold immense open-air meetings, not for the purpose of expressing disaffection or rebellion, but for religious worship. And yet the court, strangely blinded, persisted in the policy of extermination. Edicts were promulgated "that every house proved to have harbored an assembly of Protestants should be razed to the ground, and that whosoever should be present at

<sup>1</sup> A plot had been laid, in which Coligny had no part or lot, to seize the person of the king, who was at the castle of Amboise, and so rescue the throne from the influence of the Guises. It failed, and the failure was followed by wholesale massacres.

a private meeting should be sentenced to death, without hope of pardon or pity." Massacre followed massacre without abatement. Beza is authority for the statement that the infants of murdered fathers and mothers wandered through the streets crying piteously, less cared for than the dogs, with no bed but the flagstones; no one daring to relieve their hunger, or give them shelter, for fear of being accused of heresy.

The finances of the kingdom had long been in a bad way, and an assembly of Notables was called to provide for the expenses of the court. Coligny took advantage of the assembly, and at once put himself forward as the champion of his hounded and hunted brethren. We must remember that the right of petition had been revoked. It was death to champion the Huguenots in any way. But when was Coligny ever afraid to serve either his earthly or his heavenly king? He presented before the assembly two petitions. In one he shows the real causes of the kingdom's disquietude, and disclaims for his people any part in the Amboise affair. In the other he pleads for freedom of thought and liberty of worship. He wants only that Christians of one name shall have the privileges that are granted to those of another. Nay, he will be content with less than that. His people are willing to be excluded from towns, or to have a town or two in each province. They are willing to go miles away from all others who would be offended or disturbed by their assemblies. But the Guises are inexorable. They will destroy the Huguenots by crushing their leaders. And Coligny has now put himself into an attitude in which they will never more be reconciled with him. A general massacre is planned, and in

order to facilitate it the Bourbons, the house of Navarre, are summoned to court. At this moment, when a thousand furies are poising in the air for their descent, the king dies. It is as if the hand of God were stretched out from heaven to avert the slaughter. Calvin, in one of his letters at the time, commenting upon the event, says: "Did you ever hear or read of anything so opportune as the death of the little king? Just when there was no remedy for our extreme perils, God suddenly appeared from heaven, and he who had pierced the eye of the father struck the ear of the son."<sup>1</sup>

The accession of Charles IX. strengthened the hands of Catherine de Médicis, who had hitherto been overshadowed. Francis had been ruled by Mary Stuart, who was controlled by her uncles, the Guises; but Charles was a boy ten years old, scarcely out of the arms of his mother, who now reasserted her authority. Anthony de Bourbon, King of Navarre, would have been lawfully regent during the minority of Charles, but he was too weak to assert his claims, and the government fell virtually into the hands of the queen-mother. She hates both the Guise and the Huguenot: the former, because his political power threatens to abridge that of the throne; the latter, because his religious principles are opposed to unlimited despotism. Both threaten her prerogative, but from different sides. She proposes to herself, therefore, to first make an alliance with the Protestants for the removal of the Guises, and cautiously bids for the support of Huguenotism, which now embraces nearly

<sup>1</sup> Francis died from an abscess in the ear; his father, Henry II., was pierced through the eye, while tilting, by the splinter of a broken lance.

one fourth of the population, and more than three fourths of all the men of letters in the kingdom. Accordingly Montmorenci and Coligny are taken seemingly into high favor, and the Huguenots gain a good degree of toleration. Refugees come trooping back from England, Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands. A conference is called to meet at Poissy for the arrangement of religious differences, which results in an edict of toleration for the Huguenots, though under severe restrictions. In less than two months the edict is deliberately broken by the infamous massacre at Vassy. The Duke of Guise, upon entering the town on a Sunday morning, finds the Protestants assembling in a barn for religious worship, and directs his armed escort to break up the assembly. The poor people, mechanics and tradesmen for the most part, with their wives and children, try vainly to defend themselves by closing the doors; but they are no match for two or three hundred well-armed soldiery. The duke is struck by a flying missile, and in his rage orders his men to spare nobody; and a single hour sees more than forty wives made widows, sixty Huguenots slain outright and two hundred wounded, some of them mortally. Electric wires could scarcely have spread the tidings more swiftly throughout France. It was the signal for civil war.

Wherever the papists were in the majority other slaughters followed: at Paris, at Sens, at Rouen, and a score of other places. At Toulouse there was a monumental massacre of three thousand, which was commemorated by the Roman Catholics of that city in centennial festivals in 1662, in 1762, and which would have been commemorated in 1862 had it not been prohibited by the government of Napoleon III.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dr. T. M. Lindsay, *Reformation*, p. 84.

I cannot follow the scenes of the next ten years, through which Coligny stood the friend, and, so far as mortal arm could be, the defender of his hunted people: that bloody decree of Paris, by which with one stroke of the pen the entire Huguenot population of the kingdom were proscribed; Romanists commanded to arm in every parish, and at the tap of drum or stroke of bell to rise and slay their neighbors, without respect to age, or sex, or ties of family, without fear of being called to account, until, as it was said, fifty thousand were murdered; the plots for Coligny's assassination; his own proscription and outlawry; how his castle was dismantled, and his furniture, in eighty wagon-loads, carted to Paris and sold at public auction; his village burned; his escutcheon publicly broken to pieces; and his noble bearing under it all. The varying conditions of the churches and their leaders, under the caprices of Catherine, make too long and sad a story, up to the peace of St. Germain in 1570. Then came the bloody crisis, in which the red hand of Rome descended with the great destructive blow from which, to this day, the Protestantism of France has never recovered.

At the beginning of Charles's reign Catherine undertook to break the power of the Guises by allying herself with the Huguenots; but now she fears that the Huguenots themselves will abridge her influence, and plots for their destruction. The sole key to the woman's inconsistency is her ambition for personal power, which has been threatened first from one side, then from the other. The poor weak, dissolute king seems to have formed a strange liking for Coligny, in spite of his Huguenotism. The brutal mother sees a way through her son's fondness for accomplishing her cherished purposes. She will have the Huguenot lead-

ers at court for a grand holiday, and through them deal the churches her fatal blow. Young Henry of Navarre will probably come to the throne of France, and he must marry into her family; the throne must not pass out of her control. Henry of Navarre is known as a Huguenot. What a bright thought, to wed him to her daughter, and have all the Huguenot leaders, high with hopes for the betterment of their condition, come to the wedding, and then give a signal for their slaughter, beginning with Coligny! A plot worthy of Catherine de Médicis,—worthy to crown the long series of bloody deeds which have made her family infamous from the days of Savonarola! That is the plan, and it is carried out to the letter. The wedding-day comes: the Huguenots are there, Coligny and all the rest. Some bungler tries to shoot him by stealth and fails, but it is only a short reprieve.

The dawn of St. Bartholomew breaks, August 24, 1572. The awful tolling of the bell is heard. The assassins begin. Coligny, first pierced with sword-thrusts, is thrown to the pavement, unrecognizable. Guise, grim master of ceremonies, stoops and wipes the blood from the face of the murdered man to reassure himself that it is the corpse of his enemy, then kicks it, and leaves it to be beheaded by the mob, dragged headless through the streets of Paris, and finally hung by the heels upon the common gallows.

Then all through the sweet dawning light, and all that summer's day, and day after day, through Paris, through France, the work proceeds, as if cruelty ran on electric cords, till seventy thousand,<sup>1</sup> of all ages, are

<sup>1</sup> This is Sully's estimate; De Thou says twenty thousand; some authorities fix the number as high as one hundred thousand.

slain, — lusty manhood, and hoary hairs, babyhood at the breast, indiscriminately slaughtered, — until tigerish fury is wearied out, and earth, burdened with the dead, can bear no more.

And yet that church lived on ; it lives to-day. It sent even across the sea a precious contribution to the faith and devotion of American liberty and American religion. To it and that long series of troubles which led to the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes we owe those names which shine like stars in the sky of our history : the Bowdoins, and Faneuils, and Boudinots ; the Sigourneys, and Jays, and De Lanceys ; the Pintards, and Bayards, and Grimkés, — a cordon of brilliants, stretching, like the beacons of our eastern coast, from Cape Elizabeth to Florida. And that church is rising again. A grand idea is easy to start with Frenchmen, but hard to kill. France is one of those nations of which it is surely said, “The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever.”

## XI.

WILLIAM BREWSTER.

A. D. 1560-1644.

As on the first Christians in Antioch and in Rome, before churches existed there, the duty was incumbent of *forming* churches according to the mind of Christ, so on them in England, where Christ's institution had been subverted, and a different institution set up in its place, there was incumbent a duty of *re-formation* of churches. — DR. LEONARD BACON.





## XI.

WILLIAM BREWSTER.

A. D. 1560-1644.

IN the preceding chapters I have traced the Reformation movement, as it were, by a broken line upon the map of history. It has not always been possible to see, or even to conjecture, the connection which doubtless existed, binding that movement in different lands and through different ages into perfect integrity. The current has sometimes seemed to be underground, and not traceable at all; not seldom traceable only obscurely; at other times obviously unbroken through protracted periods and over long distances. We saw its faint rise in the uplands of modern history, among the Mystics of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, where the footsteps of the ordinary traveler do not penetrate; its somewhat broader and more concrete development under Wiclif in England, and Hus in Bohemia, and Savonarola in Italy, until it took on more of a national aspect in the German Reformation under Luther, the Anglican under Henry VIII., the Genevan under Calvin, the Scottish under Knox, and the French under Coligny and the Huguenots. And now we prick the chart in a strange quarter. The movement takes us away from the map of Europe, to which we have been confined hitherto, across a thousand leagues of almost un-

traveled sea, to desolate and almost unknown shores. And yet, although the break in our line is, geographically, so unprecedented and enormous, we are even more certain of the continuity and identity of the movement than we were in passing from Lutterworth to Prague, from Florence to Oxford, from Wittenberg to Paris, or from Geneva to Chatillon. It is a long link, but by no means an obscure one, that binds Plymouth and American Christianity to the Anglican Reformation.

I am to explain to you how it is that we are here, with the peculiarities of our church order and religious life; how we are connected in this great chain of causes and effects with the work of Wiclif and Hus, and Luther and Latimer. It is, of course, a very familiar story; but its importance to ourselves and to our children can never be overestimated. It is the old and well-worn title-deed which reveals to us and authenticates to the world the descent of our heritage. Its rehearsal is like that legal process of searching the title, which, however often it has been done in the past, must needs be done anew at every stage of the property's descent.

The Plymouth pilgrimage, then, was a part of the great Reformation movement, and to identify it as such in its spirit and in fact is the principal object of this lecture. It was the same great impulse that found expression in Wiclif and Latimer, in Luther and Melancthon, in Calvin and Coligny, that brought our fathers — William Brewster chief among them — to these shores. Indeed, we may say that the pilgrimage was the culmination of the Anglican Reformation. That reformation, though it seemed for the time to have culminated in the severance of the Church of

England from the papacy, under Henry VIII., was, nevertheless, very imperfect. It was little more than the substitution of one Pope for another. It made the King, instead of the Pope, the head of the Church and the fountain of spiritual authority. Henry was not a man to care very much for any real purification of morals or renovation of life. It was the division of power in his realm that he could not tolerate. And when he had once declared his independence of the papacy, he bent all his endeavors to make it real and permanent. He took advantage of the same methods which men use now — governors and presidents sometimes — to enlarge and perpetuate their powers, the judicious use of patronage and perquisites. He dissolved the monasteries and other religious establishments, and conveyed noble abbeyes and broad domains and fat livings and rich sinecures to multitudes of his favorites, so that they and their heirs and their innumerable dependents would be sure to say, "If this is what reformation means, we will stand by the Reformation." He put these things, according to the modern political proverb, "where they would do the most good." Hundreds of livings which had heretofore been held under the appointment of monasteries and abbots were now in the gift of the king and lay lords, and this bound Parliament to the royal interest. But all this, of course, only effected an external and political reformation. A great change, to be sure, — so great that the temporary relapse of a few years under Mary was not sufficient to countervail it, — but far short of those grand spiritual results which were contemplated by such men as Latimer and Ridley. Side by side with this governmental and political Protestantism which was established under Henry and Edward,

and still further under Elizabeth, and which had secured all that it had desired or hoped for, there was growing a popular and spiritual Protestantism, which unceasingly longed for purity in the worship of God, simplicity in the administration of ordinances, and renovation of life. And this was the origin of Non-conformity and Puritanism. There was no thought at first among people of this sort of any separation from the Church of England as established by law. And if Elizabeth and her silly successor, James I., had been of generous spirit and of judicious temper, the Church of Old England might possibly have held the churches of New England in communion and allegiance to this very day. But Elizabeth had more than the willfulness and autocracy and tyranny and superstition of her father, and James surpassed them both in all these qualities. Elizabeth compelled the spiritual life of her realm to assert itself in Puritanism ; then drove Puritanism into separation from the Church, and ultimately into expatriation and pilgrimage. The first year of Elizabeth's reign was signalized by an Act of Uniformity, which made it a penal offense for any religious assembly, great or small, to worship God after any fashion save that prescribed by the Prayer-Book, or for any minister to conduct a service of any sort save as accompanied by the prescribed dress, forms, ceremonies, and words, to the letter. Some of these things were identified, in the minds not only of the common people, but of the clergy and prelates also, with a superstition which they abjured and detested. And to make them compulsory, under penalty of fines and imprisonment, was a tyranny no less than that which they had endured under Rome itself. Moreover, in all parts of England the

people had been accustomed, from the times of Wiclif and his poor priests, save in the days of Mary, and even then secretly, to meet for simple worship and the reading of the Word. And now this Protestant queen — a “petticoated Pope” she has been called — made this simple act a crime on the part of any of her subjects, high or low. Plainly the Reformation had gone as far as it was likely to go in the national church. They must steal their liberty, or look for it in separation, and perhaps in exile and banishment. The Act of Supremacy had empowered the queen to establish what was known as the Court of High Commission, whose members were to be appointed at her absolute discretion, and whose powers were scarcely less than those of the Spanish Inquisition. “They were authorized to make inquiry concerning all heretical opinions, seditious books, contempts, conspiracies, false rumors or talks, slanderous words and sayings; to punish all persons willfully absent from church or divine service established by law; to visit and reform all heresies and schisms; to call before them all persons suspected of ecclesiastical offenses, and examine them, and, according to their answers, to punish them by excommunication, by fire, or by unlimited imprisonment.”<sup>1</sup> Any three members of this commission, one being a bishop, might constitute a court with full powers, might command the services of sheriffs and justices, for the apprehension and punishment of any persons in any part of the kingdom. In the reign of Mary multitudes of ministers had fled to the continent to escape persecution at her hands, and these had come under the influence of the German and Swiss reformers, whose views of church government were not pre-

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Bacon, *Genesis of New England Churches*, pp. 78, 79.

latic. There had been congregations of these English exiles in Frankfort, Zurich, Geneva, and other places, many of whom had returned upon the accession of Elizabeth, expecting that the Protestant queen would pursue a liberal policy. They were disappointed, and the High Commission had its hands full in dealing with them. Many of them found themselves vexed with prosecutions, their ministers suspended and thrown into jails and prisons, for Non-conformity. It is no wonder that, under these conditions, men began seriously to inquire whether the English Church were not ranging itself, in its spirit and its methods, along with the Romish Church, whose authority it had rejected; and whether the one had any better right than the other to claim to be exclusively the Church of Jesus Christ on earth, or even in the English nation; and whether, also, if a company of sincere believers anywhere should stately meet for religious worship and the observance of Christian ordinances, it might not claim to be a church of Jesus Christ. And for daring to assert and defend this as their theory of the Church, men were hanged, in the days of good Queen Bess, in England.<sup>1</sup> And for daring to put their theory into practice, many were seized and imprisoned, in irons, for four or five years together, without trial, or charge, or privilege of bail. Many aged widows and old men and young maidens were thrust into crowded jails, where the fever raged, and miserably perished. Others were beaten almost to death with cudgels, and this under the authority of the Head of the Reformed Church of England. And yet the heresy which, let

<sup>1</sup> See Froude's *History of England*, conclusion; Dr. Wadlington's *Penry*; Bacon's *Genesis of New England Churches*, chaps. viii., ix.

us remember, if we are ever tempted to be of a persecuting spirit, we now call orthodoxy grew, as heresy always will under such treatment; so that, as Sir Walter Raleigh said, arguing against a bill in Parliament for the suppression of the Separatists, "there are near twenty thousand of them in England."

When James I. came to the throne, upon the death of Elizabeth (1603), matters grew even worse. The monarch avowed his purpose to make the Separatists conform, or "to harry them out of the land." And because he was as good, or rather as bad, as his word, New England was first settled as it was.

At this time there was standing in an insignificant village in the North of England, Scrooby by name, on the great post-road from London to Berwick, an ancient manor-house which had belonged to the archbishops of York. To it the great Wolsey had retreated in his disgrace, to meditate upon the instability of human greatness and the uncertainty of royal favor. Henry VIII. himself had lodged there. Elizabeth had desired to gain possession of it for her favorite, the Earl of Leicester, but the archbishop would not be persuaded to part with it. Of late years, however, the old manor-house had become alienated from the see, and at this time of which I speak was occupied under lease by one William Brewster. He had been a man of affairs under Elizabeth, and had seen much of court and diplomatic life at home and abroad. Educated at the University of Cambridge, he possessed the knowledge of books, in addition to that better knowledge gained by experience and travel and large intercourse with men. In the "Old Colony Records" there is an inventory of his books, numbering nearly three hundred volumes, of which sixty-four are in the



learned languages, — a library more considerable for that day than one of two thousand would be now. When he was about twenty-five years of age he entered the service of Mr. William Davison, one of Queen Elizabeth's ambassadors, and afterwards one of her principal secretaries of state. He was thus brought while a young man into acquaintance with the splendid court of Elizabeth. He must have met with Sir Philip Sidney, with Walsingham and Cecil, Lord Burleigh, not improbably with Sir Walter Raleigh and Shakespeare and Bacon and Spenser and Drayton. Through many years of faithful service he was with the secretary, going with him upon important foreign embassies, and serving him as under-secretary, and trusted, as Governor Bradford says, "above all others that were about him, employed in matters of greatest trust and secrecy, esteemed rather as a son than as a servant; and for his wisdom and godliness, the secretary would converse with him more like a friend and familiar than a master."<sup>1</sup> And what manner of man this young William Brewster was still further appears from the fact that when his patron fell into misfortune and unmerited disgrace this friend did not desert him. He became involved in the unhappy affair of Mary, Queen of Scots. When Elizabeth had determined upon Mary's execution, she ordered Mr. Secretary Davison to make out the death-warrant. She signed it, and bade him take it to the lord chancellor for the great seal, which he did, and it was sealed and executed accordingly. The execution accomplished and poor Mary's head off, Elizabeth chided the secretary for his haste in obeying her own com-

<sup>1</sup> Governor Bradford's "Memoir of Elder Brewster," *Young's Chronicles of the Pilgrims*, p. 463.

mands, and, to throw dust into the eyes of her conscience, deprived him of his office, confiscated his property, and thrust him into the Tower. But Brewster was no fair-weather friend. "He remained," as Governor Bradford tells us, with the fallen secretary, "some good time after that he was put from his place, doing him many faithful offices of service in the time of his troubles."<sup>1</sup> But this was the turning-point in Brewster's history. He was wanted for higher service than any that he could render at the court of Elizabeth. There was a little company of persecuted Christian people up in the North of England, of whom as yet he knew nothing, they knowing as little of him, who even now were needing his help. He was not a Separatist as yet, though a Puritan in his principles, doubtless, as his patron the secretary had been. At this crisis in his affairs, probably through the influence of some court friend, he was appointed one of the queen's posts on the great high road from London to York and Edinburgh; and the next that we hear of him he is domiciled in that capacity in the archbishop's old manor-house at Serooby. He is not to be thought of by us as merely "the postmaster of Serooby." Serooby had little to do with his office, or his office with Serooby. There was not then, as now, a post-office in every village. The service was one of great trust and responsibility, and more for the use of the queen, her court and parliament and government officers, than for the general use of the people. It was not a provision for private correspondence. Here, as the queen's or king's officer, — for he held over under James, — he tarried for some thirteen years.

<sup>1</sup> Governor Bradford's "Memoir of Elder Brewster," in Young's *Chronicles of the Pilgrims*, p. 464.

Here he was married and children were born unto him ; here he was a man of note, and made his influence felt for good through all the country around ; and here, better than all, he became godfather and protector to the first Christian church of New England. Seeing, year after year, the suspension, deprivation, and silencing of ministers whom he knew, upon whose ministry he had attended, and the continued persecution of men for no other reason than their desire to live soberly, righteously, and godly, and to worship in their own way, and despairing of any change for the better in the Church, he quietly withdrew, and associated himself with a little company of men and women who worshiped in the neighborhood. They had a deposed rector for their pastor, and for their teacher a man of gentle, ingenuous spirit, whose name, John Robinson, we have all learned to speak with loving reverence, as though he were still the pastor and teacher of us all. "They joined themselves (by a covenant of the Lord) into a church estate in the fellowship of the gospell, to walk in all his wayes made known, or to be made known unto them according to their best endeavors, whatsoever it should cost them, the Lord assisting them."<sup>1</sup> They completed their organization as a separate church by choosing Brewster himself as their ruling elder, and thenceforth worshiped with him in the old manor-house, which had been in turn the lodging-place of royalty and the abode of the proudest prelate that England ever saw, but which had never before sheltered three as noble souls as John Robinson, William Brewster, and William Bradford.

<sup>1</sup> Governor Bradford's "History of Plymouth Colony," in Young's *Chronicles of the Pilgrims*, p. 21. This was in 1602.

But a company of people thus asserting their right to exist as a separate church, and meeting regularly for worship and for instruction, could hardly expect to defy the Act of Uniformity with impunity. They had need to count the cost, and see whether, with their little handful, they would be able to meet the king, who would come against them with his twenty thousand. They speedily found that James's threat to "make them conform or harry them out" was no meaningless piece of bravado. Harry them he did forthwith; the whole machinery of persecution was set in motion for their special benefit. "Some," says one of their number, "were taken and clapt into prison; others had their houses beset and watched night and day, they barely escaping; while the most part were fain to fly and leave all, — habitations, friends, and means of living." Under these various persecutions Brewster was their strong stay, his friendship the one visible bond of union. He had been long in coming into this relationship with them, and when he came it was for a lifelong union, an inviolable marriage, for richer, for poorer, to love and to cherish till death should part. There was, and is, something as grand as it is simple about the pilgrim view of the church relationship. It is not a sentimental liking for an institution; it is not an artificial and superficial union founded upon some preterite history: but it is a giving up of the living man to other living men, wholly, the interest of all the interest of each, and the corporate spiritual life of the body dearer to each than any or all separate and individual interests can be. And so it at once became the question of all questions with these men, not, How shall I personally escape the storm of royal and ecclesiastical wrath? That question would have

been easily answered : I will take myself into a strict personal retirement, and nourish my spiritual life in solitude and safety. That, however, was not the question, but, How shall we save and nourish this corporate life? Here is a church of Jesus Christ, a compacted spiritual and social force for the kingdom of God : how shall we save it to the world ? It is a unity more precious than any solitary unit of selfhood can be. See how the reasoning and conduct of these men were along the line of the principle that the individual is primarily for the church, and only secondarily is the church for the individual. And so they said, The church must not be dissipated, but must move as one man, even though it be to the ends of the earth. To the ends of the earth it proved ultimately to be. But whither first? Why, to the nearest place where the church could be permitted to maintain its precious corporate life, and that was to the free states of Holland, just across the German Ocean. There, they had heard, was freedom for all. But what must they personally sacrifice to preserve this precious corporate force, the life of the church? First of all, native land ; for how long they could not tell, perhaps forever. It turned out to be forever. They must go to a strange people, of strange language, of different customs ; probably to new and unwonted employments ; to a country that had just been, and might soon again be, the scene of bloody war. As Bradford said,<sup>1</sup> "to go into a country they knew not but by hearsay, where they must learn a new language and get their livings they knew not how, seemed an adventure almost desperate. . . . But these things did not dismay

<sup>1</sup> Bradford's *History of Plymouth Colony*, *ut supra*, pp. 25, 26.

them, although they did sometimes trouble them ; for their desires were set in the ways of God and to enjoy his ordinances. They rested in his providence, and knew whom they had believed." But how long would it take them, a few men and women with a rather meagre array of worldly gear, to get across to Holland, a few hours' sail, with their little church? Brewster, who was their man of affairs, had chartered a ship that could take them all. But it was necessary to be cautious ; the ports were closed against Separatists. If their going were to be bruited abroad they would be in danger of seizure and imprisonment. They managed to embark, and thought they were safe. But their captain betrayed them to the authorities, and they were taken from their ship in open boats, their persons searched and rifled, their women treated with gross indignity, and their leaders, Brewster and Bradford among them, "clapt into prison." Thus, for six months, the attempt was a miserable failure. Had their church any existence then? Where was it? One member here, another there ; some in prison cells, some in voluntary hiding. There was no edifice. There was no sign of visible organism. Where was the little church of Scrooby, that afterwards became the church of Plymouth and "the mother of us all"? It was where the first Church of Christ on earth was when its head and leader was in the Arimathean's tomb, and the disciples had scattered and fled. It was in the secret thought, and unshaken purpose, and undecaying affection, and unchanged spiritual loyalty of their locally scattered but secretly united souls. They were still at one, and the next spring they tried again. But, with all their caution, their plans were discovered and their purposes well-nigh defeated. It was a

broken, fragmentary flight, in which husbands were separated from wives and parents from children ; some were taken and subjected again to fines and imprisonments, and after long delay released ; some were exposed to a tempestuous voyage of fourteen days in crossing that little patch of water. What, through all these tribulations, sustained their courage and kept their purpose firm ? Nothing but the consciousness that they were on the side of God and everlasting truth, and God was with them. " And so it came to pass," as St. Paul says, " that they escaped all safe to land," — words of which Bradford's read like a paraphrase : " In the end they all got over, some at one time, some at another, and met together again with no small rejoicing."

In Amsterdam they were now (summer of 1608). But for no very long time, — a year or thereabouts. Other Separatists were there. In fact, Amsterdam had become a harbor for persecuted exiles, not only from other parts of England, but from all parts of the Continent. There were other churches there founded after the fashion of their own. But few churches of that or of any other day were so fortunate as to have for their leading spirits such men as John Robinson and Elder Brewster. And among these Separatists already on the ground were uneasy, contentious, crotchety spirits, who were embroiling their brethren and keeping them in hot water upon petty questions about peculiarities of female dress : whether the pastor's wife should wear whalebones, and cork heels upon her shoes, and other equally important matters. To our Pilgrims the causes of strife seemed so pitiful, and the minds which could be exercised by them so petty, that they speedily moved their church forty miles away to

the ancient city of Leyden, where now their home was to be for eleven years. Already had they well earned the name of Pilgrims.

It was a famous era in the history of Holland and in the history of human liberty at which our little church came to Leyden. It was just at the close of what has been called "the most glorious war for liberty ever waged." It was the very year in which the grand twelve years' truce between Spain and her revolted colonies had been negotiated and ratified. Was there a divine prearrangement in this, that the truce was made just to cover the period during which the Pilgrims were to remain; that peace should be insured for so long a time, when peace, after all its turmoils, was what the little church most desired and needed for its compacting, its growth, and its influence? And Leyden was a noble city, with its famous university. Here Arminius had taught, and founded that system which has shared with Calvin's in the disputes of two hundred years. Here too Scaliger had taught, and Grotius was already making his contribution to the fame of the city and its university. Years of peace and of honor, and yet of struggle too, were these years of its Leyden life to the little church. John Robinson, who had been a fellow of his college at home, was loved and honored here. He was taken into the bosom of the university, which became a second Alma Mater to him, was made free of its privileges and a member of its society.<sup>1</sup> Brewster, whose life at college and at court, and whose experience on his embassy to Holland years before, had given him much advantage in his return, was an ornament to the little band of exiles, in the eyes of the strangers around them. He

<sup>1</sup> George Sumner's *Memoirs of the Pilgrims at Leyden*, p. 18.



grew famous among the students as a teacher of his own language through his knowledge of Latin, which all could understand. As for the rank and file of the company, they peacefully and quietly adapted themselves to their new conditions, learning the trades and arts of the people among whom they sojourned, as dyers and weavers, wool-carders and printers; betaking themselves to such employments as they could find, without being a burden to any, and eating their bread in honesty, and in gladness and singleness of heart. It was a peaceful harbor after the storm. There, in their own language, "they enjoyed much sweet and delightful society and spiritual comfort together in the ways of God, and lived together in peace and love and holiness."<sup>1</sup> They deserve to be called the Huguenots of England, and William Brewster was their Coligny.

One by one other dear English names were added to the roll of the little church while it tarried in Leyden, each one no doubt awakening and then in turn assuaging the homesickness which they must have often felt. It was here that Robert Cushman joined them, who preached the first sermon that was printed in New England; and Miles Standish, who had fought for the Dutch against Spain, and who could read Cæsar and fight as well as he, and who was to be in future years their defender against the savages of the

<sup>1</sup> Governor Bradford's *History*, *ut supra*, p. 36. Bradford further records a beautiful tribute to their social influence: "The magistrates of the city, about the time of their coming away, or a little before, in the public place of justice, gave this commendable testimony of them, in reproof of the Walloons, who were of the French Church in the city. 'These English,' said they, 'have lived amongst us now this twelve years, and yet we never had any suit or accusation come against any of them. But your strifes and quarrels are continual,'" etc. *Id.* p. 39.

New World; and John Carver, who was to be their first governor over the seas; and Edward Winslow, who was to be one of his successors. And so they grew into what was, for a colony of exiles, a strong congregation, worshiping in the house of their pastor twice on the first day of the week and once in the intervening time; ecclesiastically isolated, but by that very isolation driven more closely in upon the resources of their own fellowship, and growing strong in the tenderness of the bond which made them one in Christ Jesus.

The influences around them were friendly, as I have said. They won the respect and love of their Dutch neighbors. But in the course of a few years they began to feel that this was not, could not be, their rest. The preservation and perpetuity of their church was ever uppermost in their thoughts. It was a light which must be kept burning, it was the hope of their children, it was one of the hopes of the world. They wanted it to continue, to be a refuge for others who should be like-minded with themselves.

"*First*," they said,<sup>1</sup> "the hardness of their present place and country, to them so great, was such that few would come to continue with them; while could a place of better and easier living be found, such discouragements would be removed.

"*Second*. Though in general their people bore all difficulties cheerfully and resolutely in their best strength, old age was coming on some, great and continued labors and trials were hastening it before its time upon others, and it was apparent that in the present state of things there was danger of soon being scattered or of sinking under their burdens.

<sup>1</sup> Condensed from Bradford, *ut supra*, pp. 45-47.

*“Third.* Over them was the task-master Necessity, forcing them to become task-masters not only to servants, but in a measure to their children, wounding the heart of many a father and mother and producing sad consequences. Children of the best dispositions and gracious inclinations, who were learning to bear the yoke in their youth and willing to share in their parents’ labors, were yet at times so oppressed by labor that, though with minds free and willing, their bodies became bowed under the weight and early disfigured, the vigor of nature being exhausted in the very bud. And what was worse, many of their children, by the surrounding temptations and the great licentiousness of the youth of the country and their evil example, were drawn away, grew headstrong, leaving their parents: some becoming soldiers, others sailing on distant voyages, others taking to worse courses, to their parents’ grief, their souls’ danger, and the dishonor of God, all foreboding a degenerate and corrupt posterity.” And to this they added <sup>1</sup> “their great desire to live under the protection of England and to retain the language and name of Englishmen, their inability to give their children here such an education as they themselves had received, and also their grief at the profanation of the Sabbath in Holland.”

And, finally, grandest thought of all in the hearts of these generous, self-sacrificing men, “A great hope and inward zeal they had of laying some good foundation for propagating and advancing the kingdom of Christ in remote parts of the world; yea, though they should be but stepping-stones unto others for the performing of so great a work.”

<sup>1</sup> These supplementary reasons are not given by Bradford, but added by Edward Winslow.

And whither should they go, and how procure the means for such an undertaking? At length all possible quarters being canvassed, they send their messengers to the Virginia Company in London to apply for a grant to plant themselves under its general government, and to petition his majesty for a grant of liberty or freedom in religion.

The Virginia Company of course entertained the proposition eagerly, but no toleration under the seal of the king was to be thought of. All that could be elicited from that quarter was an assurance that the king and the bishops "would wink at their departure."

But the feuds and factions of the Virginia Company were such in the arrangement of the matter that their charter was long delayed, and finally never used. An agreement was entered into with certain merchant adventurers, whose terms were exceedingly oppressive, by which the Mayflower was to take the company on board at Southampton, and the Speedwell was to bring them to that port and keep them company across the sea. The church did not propose to go in its integrity,—only those who freely offered themselves; if the majority chose to go, the pastor, Robinson, was to go with them. A little less than half of the whole number offered, and the pastor tarried behind. The hope, however, was that at no distant time they would be reunited. Meantime each party was to exercise all the functions of a church.

All being in readiness, they spent a day of solemn fasting and prayer, and their pastor having preached them a farewell discourse, they poured out their supplications before the Lord with abundance of tears, then proceeded together to the port of Delft, where the

last good-bys were said, and the Pilgrims for the third time went out, not knowing whither they went. They find the Mayflower at Southampton, according to agreement, and after a few days occupied in necessary preparations the two little ships spread their sails for the unknown port. Accidents happen, and they must put back once and again; finally the Speedwell is left behind as unfit for the voyage, and the Mayflower, with one hundred and one passengers, on the 16th September, 1620, proceeds on her way alone. What a harvest was in that handful of seed-corn! What a precious freight of the world's best hopes to be intrusted in so frail a bark to the rough waves and the rude blasts of the autumnal equinox! What a venture for men who had hardly been out of sight of land, for timid women and little children! What audacity of faith, what ineffable courage! And what royal determination, when, in mid-ocean, their little craft weakened by the September gales, strained and yielding in her frame, they refuse to put back at the suggestion of the captain and other officers, and bring out an old iron screw, whose use none could have foretold, and press the bulging timbers back into their place! They were *born* to found empire or church, these men and women.

The story thenceforth is too familiar to be dwelt upon save in the most cursory manner. I will not endeavor even to freshen its outlines in your recollection. I do not need tell you of the immortal compact, drawn up, no doubt, by Elder Brewster himself, which has been pronounced the germ of American constitutions; nor when, and where, and how, the Pilgrims landed. Why should I rehearse their debarkation amid the snows; their resting upon the Sabbath, ac-

ording to the commandment, for six Sabbaths; their long explorations and weary journeys to and fro about the shores of Cape Cod, the rain often hardening to ice upon their garments, until they were like coats of iron, women and children mewed up meanwhile in the little ship, their monotonous sea-life prolonged to three weary months and more, until at last they found the divinely appointed place, and set their feet upon the rock, of which one of New England's scholars has said, "Even then, without its fellow upon our shores, it was destined to be without its fellow on any shore throughout the world. Nature had laid it, the Architect of the universe had laid it, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. There it had reposed unseen by human eye, the storms and floods of centuries beating and breaking on it. There it had reposed awaiting the slow-coming feet, which, guided and guarded by no mere human power, were now to make it famous forever. The Pilgrims trod it, it would seem, unconsciously, and left nothing but authentic tradition to identify it. Their thoughts, at that hour, were upon no stone of earthly mould. If they observed at all what was beneath their feet, it may indeed have helped them still more fervently to lift their eyes to Him who had been predicted and promised 'as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land,' and may have given renewed emphasis to the psalm, which, perchance, they may have recalled: 'From the end of the earth will I cry unto Thee when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I.' Their trust was only in the Rock of Ages."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hon. Robert C. Winthrop, *Oration at the Two Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the Landing of the Pilgrims*, 1870.

William Brewster was now getting to be an old man, three-score years of age; but for nearly a quarter of a century longer he was spared to be known and loved by the little church of the Pilgrimage as Elder Brewster. I have used his name partly because of the greatness and nobleness of the man himself, and partly because of the official relation which he sustained to the transit of the reformed religion from the Old World to the New. The Pilgrims first left England as a church; they tarried at Amsterdam as a church; they remained eleven years at Leyden as a church; they embarked upon the Mayflower, and sailed the sea, and stepped upon the shores of Plymouth as a church. This, therefore, as I said at the outset, was the true culmination of the Reformation of the Church of England. That they brought a Christian state with them also was incidental, not essential. They were the first to exhibit to the world what are the true relations that should exist between the two: that the Church shall be free, absolutely free, in its worship and ordinances and discipline; that the State shall only protect it; that neither the one nor the other shall interfere in the peculiar function of its fellow. Calvin had not made the discovery at Geneva, nor Knox in Scotland. The Huguenots were dimly looking towards it, and hoping for it. The Church of England had not even remotely approached it. The Pilgrims accomplished it; but "with a great price obtained they this freedom."

The foundations that were laid by Brewster and his companions have been loftily built upon by later ages with much that is good, with much also that is evil; something of gold, silver, precious stones, doubtless,—something doubtless of wood, hay, stubble, which time

and change, and the judgments of God which time and change always bring, will surely burn away.

But the foundation will abide of belief in the eternal verities of a just and righteous God, who is the friend of all who obey Him ; of faith in his Son, who is the divine Saviour, and must be the supreme Master of human life ; of a revelation of faith and a law of practice that are sufficient for all the moral needs of men, and adequate to the renovation of the world.





## XII.

### JOHN WESLEY.

A. D. 1703-1791.

THE power of the Gospel to create anew has been its standing miracle in all the Christian ages. It is its highest and most divine authentication. Celsus was right, looking from his own point of view. No mere human culture can change the *nature* of man. It can only cover over, civilize, and adorn. But those in whom sin has become a second nature are the very persons in whom the Gospel has wrought its most wondrous transformations, from Paul and Augustine down to the Wesleyan revivals of the last century and the most remarkable conversions of to-day.—E. H. SEARS, *Sermons and Songs*.



## XII.

### JOHN WESLEY.

A. D. 1703-1791.

THE eighteenth century was but three years old when John Wesley was born, and his life extended into its last decade. The eighty-eight years of that life embraced eleven of the twelve that Anne was upon the throne, the thirteen years of the reign of George I., the thirty-three of that of George II., and something more than thirty of that of George III. The latest biographer of Wesley<sup>1</sup> has quoted a writer in the "North British Review," who says, "Never has a century risen in Christian England so void of soul and faith. It rose as a sunless dawn following upon a dewless night. There was no freshness in the past and no promise in the future. The Puritans were buried and the Methodists were not born. The philosopher of the age was Bolingbroke, the moralist was Addison, the minstrel was Pope, and the preacher was Atterbury. The world had the idle, discontented look of the morning after some mad holiday; and like rocket-sticks, and the singed paper from last night's squibs, the spent jokes of Charles and Rochester lay all about, and people yawned to look at them. The reign of buffoonery was past, but the reign of faith and earnestness had not commenced." This sharp in-

<sup>1</sup> Tyerman, *Life and Times of John Wesley*, vol. i., p. 61.

dictment of the age is true, but it does not go far enough; it does not express the full enormity of the fact. If the reign of buffoonery was past, it was only because all that was worst in the buffoonery of the Restoration period had been adopted into society that claimed for itself the perfection of respectability and propriety. The buffoon was still there; only the paint had been washed from his face, his party-colored garb exchanged for decent clothes, and his indecent tumblings laid aside for a gait that was curbed into a stilted and uneasy dignity. The reign of Queen Anne still claims to have been the golden age of English literature, and it shows a polished surface, to be sure, to the eye which gives but a cursory glance at its records. There are Steele, and Addison, and Pope, and Bishop Berkeley, and Samuel Clarke, walking in the garments of literary and social chastity, and Young with his vast religious pretentiousness; but Swift, greater intellectually than any of them, and a high church dignitary to boot, would have disgraced the license of the Merry Monarch's court and outdone it in profanity. Etherege, and Wycherley, and Buckingham, and Aphra Behn, and even Dryden, made the literature of Charles II.'s age infamous for all time. Anne's reign produced no such numerous spawn of indecency; but neither did it give birth to any such pure lights of heavenly radiance as Milton, and Izaak Walton, and Bishop Burnett, and Isaac Barrow, and John Bunyan. It was as cold and spiritually lifeless as it was elegant. Licentiousness was the open and shameless profession of the higher classes in the days of Charles; in the time of Anne it festered under the surface. On my lady's table is lying a volume of Bishop Jeremy Taylor's "Sermons," or his "Holy

Living and Dying." But lift the book, and underneath you will be likely to find the licentious comedies of Etherege showing evidences of more frequent perusal. It was an age of unbounded extravagance and worldliness. Material splendor was a grand passion, and next to that, indulgence in gross animal pleasure. In order to obtain money for vain display, and to command the greatest amount of vicious pleasures, all means were resorted to, and the discrimination between honesty and dishonesty was well-nigh obliterated. Gambling was an almost universal practice, among men and women alike. Lords and ladies were skilled in knavery; disgrace was not in cheating, but in being cheated. Both sexes were given to profanity and to drunkenness. Sarah Jennings, Duchess of Marlborough, could swear more bravely than her husband could fight. Gin had been introduced just at the close of the last century; before the middle of this its annual consumption in England rose to seven million gallons. And as all fashions, good and bad, work downwards, hardly ever in the opposite direction, the middle classes ran the same race of corruption, and the lowest were eager to follow. Tradesmen and shopkeepers aped the follies of the Court, with their "long wigs and swords, velvet breeches and hunting-caps." The wages of the poor were spent in guzzling beer at merry-makings; in wakes and fairs, badger-baitings and cock-fights. Matters were running in very much the same course as they were in France at the same time, — a course which in the latter country had its terrific outcome in the Revolution, near the close of the century. And the only thing which in all probability saved England from a similar social earthquake was the sudden rise of Methodism, which laid hold of the

lower classes and converted them before they were ripe for an explosion. That such an explosion did not occur in England, no thanks are due to any general religious influence that was exerted by the Church, or even by the Dissenting interest. The Dissenters had become cold and formal and the Church was well-nigh moribund. Parsons celebrated holy communion and preached to a score of hearers in the morning, devoted the afternoon of Sunday to cards, and hunted foxes the rest of the week with the neighboring squires. In very many cases the sole religious requisition made upon the clergyman was of a negative sort; he need not even write his sermons, there were sermons enough in the world ready made; he must only take care not to scandalize the Church by too gross indulgence in liquor or politics. Probably at no period in its history was the outlook so dark upon the moral, religious, and social life of England. The fullness of time had certainly come. We can see it now as probably it could not then have been discerned. Unless some superhuman force had seized upon society for its immediate transformation and purification, it must have sunk into a perdition like that of the Cities of the Plain, or have been rent into fragments by some revolutionary explosion from beneath.

The transforming and renovating energy was gathering in a very inconspicuous and entirely unconscious way. "In November, 1729, four young gentlemen of the University of Oxford — Mr. John Wesley, Fellow of Lincoln College; Mr. Charles Wesley, student of Christ Church; Mr. Morgan, Commoner of Christ Church; and Mr. Kirkham, of Merton College — began to spend some evenings in a week together in reading, chiefly the Greek Testament." These four

young men were the first Methodists, a "handful of corn," whose fruit now, after a hundred and fifty years, shakes like Lebanon and flourishes like the grass of the earth. The Methodists to-day number five millions; and if we calculate the hearers at the rate of thrice the number of church-members there is a total of 15,000,000 of persons coming continually under Methodist instruction and influence, and meeting week after week for the worship of God. In the light of these figures alone, it is not an immodest or immoderate assertion which one of the historians of Methodism makes when he declares it to be the greatest fact in the history of the Church of Christ; greater than the spread of primitive Christianity in the first two centuries, greater than the Reformation of the sixteenth century, — this reformation, which began in the days of our grandfathers, and part of which we have witnessed ourselves; which has given to America its dominant popular faith, with a standard planted in almost every village of the land; and which is building churches and chapels, year in and year out, at the rate of nearly two every day.<sup>1</sup>

For more than fifty years one man was the controlling spirit of this great movement; one man gave it form and consistency; the leader of the four young men who met to spend some evenings in the week in reading, chiefly the Greek Testament, — John Wesley.

Let us turn back for a few moments to glance at the facts of his childhood and youth.

About fifteen miles to northeast of Scrooby, where

<sup>1</sup> I have found it somewhat difficult to get at the exact statistics of Methodism; in fact, it grows so rapidly that the statistician and census-taker can hardly keep their figures up with its progress.



the Pilgrim Church was first gathered, lies the parish of Epworth, of which for forty years the Reverend Samuel Wesley was the learned and godly rector. To him and his wife Susannah were born nineteen children, one of whom, John, came just about one hundred years after the Pilgrim Congregation was first assembled in Scrooby manor-house. His brother Charles, destined to be the poet of Methodism, as John was to be its prophet, was five years younger. The material advantages surrounding Wesley's childhood, one would naturally think, must have been slender; the parental care must have been rather minutely subdivided, the parental income also. Indeed, before John was three years old his father was imprisoned for debt, and before he was six the parsonage was destroyed by fire, and he had a narrow escape with his life, being drawn through an upper window but a moment before the roof fell in. His mother must have been a veritable well-spring of wholesome and gracious influences to her children, commanding, as she did, after they had come into ripe and influential manhood, not only their loving reverence for her person but their respect for her judgment and practical counsel. She was large-minded and liberal and far-seeing; loved God with all her heart, and her neighbor as herself. The piety of the household was of a wholesome type, free from hypocrisy and pretense of every sort; the children being trained and treated as Christians from their infancy, and not as pagans who might possibly become Christians at some future time. Jack, as they called him, came to the communion and received the sacrament at his father's hand when he was eight years of age. He thought in after years that he sinned away that "washing of the Holy Ghost"

which he received in baptism ; but the reader of his life looks in vain for the evidence of any such "fall from grace." Shortly after his first communion he was attacked by the small-pox, but bore the terrible scourge with such heroic patience that his mother wrote, "Jack has borne his disease bravely, like a man, and indeed like a Christian, without complaint."

His "fall from grace" occurred, as he thought, when he was at the Charterhouse School in London, where he was sent at ten years of age. We love Wesley for the beautiful tenderness and delicacy of his conscience, and the ingenuousness and frankness of his confessions, and for his fidelity in dealing with himself, never adopting any lower or easier standard than he applies to others ; but when we think of the little fellow taken up to London from the warm atmosphere of a Christian home, and immersed in the unfriendly influences of a great public school, as public schools were then and are in England to this day, subjected to the tyrannies and ferocities of scores of elder boys, to their ridicule and browbeating, made all the more severe because of his poverty, and discover that he bore it all with the same patience that he did the small-pox, suffering wrongfully with cheerful fortitude, and that at the same time he was faithful in his studies, acquiring all approbation for diligence and assiduity, we may be more charitable to him than he was to himself, or than his latest biographer has been, who says that "John Wesley entered the Charterhouse a saint, and left it a sinner." We will agree that he was a saint when he entered ; we do not believe that he had forfeited his right to the name when he departed.

He proceeded in due time to Oxford, being elected to Christ Church on a Charterhouse foundation. He

seems to have had no purpose to enter the Church, though it was the earnest desire of his parents that he should succeed to the incumbency of his father. Indeed, he afterwards supposed that at this time he was not even a Christian. But of one thing he seems to have possessed throughout a profound conviction; carrying his beliefs in the reality and nearness of the spiritual world even to superstition. He hears ghost stories and tells them, believes them and writes about them in all seriousness. They do not inspire him indeed with any vulgar terrors, but they intensify his convictions of the existence of the supernatural realm, and undoubtedly exercise an important influence upon his future life. In this, however, he is no exception. Ghosts and witches at that time, and for a hundred years after, were realities to the learned and ignorant alike. Wesley was born only eleven years after the Salem Delusion, and the very next year after Cotton Mather published his "Magnalia." Strange things were very soon to happen in his own experience.

Whether he became a Christian in early childhood or not, there certainly came a turning-point in his spiritual history when he was twenty-three years of age, upon his perusal of two famous books, Thomas à Kempis's "Imitation of Christ" and Jeremy Taylor's "Holy Living and Dying." "When I met with the first," he says, "the nature and extent of inward religion, the religion of the heart, appeared to me in a stronger light than ever it had done before. I saw that giving even all my life to God (supposing it possible to do this, and go no further) would profit me nothing, unless I gave my heart, yea all my heart, to Him. I saw that simplicity of intention and purity of affection, one design in all we speak and do, and one

desire ruling all our tempers, are indeed the wings of the soul, without which she can never ascend to God. I sought after this from that hour." And if ever mortal man attained to that simplicity of intention and purity of affection, that singleness of design and desire, it was John Wesley. At this stage of his history his mother seems to have been his guide and helper, not only in his religious experience, but in the formation of his religious opinions. There is something wonderful in this Oxford scholar, of four years' standing, and of first-rate attainments, sending his heart-doubts and theological difficulties away down to the country parsonage in Lincolnshire, to have them solved by his care-worn, "many-childed mother." There is something more wonderful in the clean way in which she unties the knots or — cuts them. The Methodist Church owes its system of doctrine quite as much, I think, to Susannah Wesley as to her illustrious son. To the intuitions of a woman she added the logic of a gownsman and the love of a saint. Finer letters were never written. It is not to be wondered at that Methodists have been pioneers in the enfranchisement of feminine speech, that they have believed in it, and practiced it from the first. They would have disgraced their origin otherwise.

At length, in accordance with the wishes of his parents, Wesley was ordained a deacon in 1725, but with little thought of pursuing any other than a collegiate life. In the popular mind, Wesley has been so completely identified with the ignorant and humble multitudes to whose spiritual elevation he gave all the best endeavors of his life, and his ministers were so often men of very meagre intellectual gifts, and the great Church which he founded, in its early days, set

such slight estimate upon any other human attainments than those of a purely spiritual kind, that Wesley himself has been underrated on the intellectual side. But his scholarship was of fine quality. Wesley was Greek lecturer in the University, and fellow of Lincoln College, at twenty-four years of age. He was the peer, in his intellectual endowments, of any literary character of that most literary period. No gownsman of the University, no lawned and mitred prelate of his time, was intellectually the superior of this itinerating Methodist, — a bishop more truly than the Archbishop of Canterbury himself in everything but the empty name. The hosts of literary pamphleteers and controversialists that rained their attacks upon his system, in showers, were made to feel the keenness of his logic and the staggering weight of his responsive blows. It is a fine sight to look upon from this distance, that of this single, modest man, an unpretentious knight of true religion and consecrated learning, beset for forty years by scores, yes hundreds, of assailants, armed in all the ostentation of churchly dignity, shooting at him with their arrows of tracts and sermons; newspaper writers pouring upon him their ceaseless squibs; malicious critics assailing his motives and his methods with innuendoes and false suggestions; ponderous professors tilting at him with their heavier lances of book and stately treatise; and he, alone, giving more than thrust for thrust, and his brother Charles furnishing the inspiring accompaniment of martial music until the one man has chased a thousand, and the two have put ten thousand to flight.

It was at this time, while attending to his college duties, that Wesley settled upon those convictions, — which during his life-time were peculiar to the Meth-

odists, but which at this day are so generally accepted by believers in spiritual religion everywhere, — which are practically adopted and acted upon even by many whose denominational pride and traditional proclivities cause them to reject the doctrines formally and theoretically. Let me briefly state them in his own language: —

“Justification means present forgiveness, pardon of sins, and acceptance with God. The condition of this is faith. I mean not only that without faith we cannot be justified, but also that as soon as any one has true faith, *in that moment* he is justified. Good works follow this faith, but cannot go before it, much less can sanctification, which implies a continued course of good works springing from holiness of heart.

“Repentance must go before faith, and fruits meet for it if there be opportunity. By repentance I mean conviction of sin, producing real desires and sincere resolutions of amendment; and by fruits meet for repentance, I mean forgiving our brother, ceasing from evil, and doing good, using the ordinances of God, and in general obeying Him according to the measure of grace which we have received. But these I cannot as yet term good works, because they do not spring from faith and the love of God.

“By salvation I mean, not barely deliverance from hell or going to heaven, but a present deliverance from sin, a restoration of the soul to its primitive health, its original purity, a recovery of the divine nature, the renewal of our souls after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness, in justice, and mercy, and truth. This implies all holy and heavenly tempers, and, by consequence, all holiness of conversation.

“Faith is the sole condition of this salvation. Without faith we cannot thus be saved, for we cannot rightly serve God unless we love Him. And we cannot love Him unless we know Him, and we cannot know Him unless by faith.

“Faith in general is a divine, supernatural conviction of things not seen, *i. e.*, of things past, future, or spiritual. Justifying faith implies not only a divine conviction that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself; but a sure trust and confidence that Christ died for my sins; that He loved me, and gave himself for me. And the moment a penitent sinner believes that, God pardons and absolves him.

“And as soon as his pardon or justification is witnessed to him by the Holy Ghost he is saved. He loves God and all mankind. He has the mind that was in Christ, and power to walk as He walked. From that time, unless he makes shipwreck of his faith, salvation gradually increases in his soul.”

To these doctrines Wesley added others, as his religious experience grew in later years. But this is a fair summary of what was held by the first Methodists. And there was nothing here to furnish sufficient grounds for a new sect. Indeed, Wesley intended no such thing. These things were legitimately held as actually embraced in, or deducible from, the Articles of the Church of England, from which Wesley contemplated no withdrawal. Methodism was not a dissenting from, but a supplementing of, the doctrines and life of the Church. It was a return to realism. It was an honest, earnest endeavor not to bring in a new theology, but to put some life under the ribs of the old. It closely resembled the movement which, in these days of ours, has been termed the Theological

Renaissance of the nineteenth century. These statements of Wesley, trite, and even formal, as they seem to us, were the New Theology of his day. They were deemed heretical and mischievous. All the artillery of wit, of scorn, of ridicule, of hatred, were trained upon them. But it was a movement *within* the Church, and not *from* the Church. Wesley refused through life to be called anything but a presbyter of the Church of England; even when he was excluded from the majority of her pulpits, he still worshiped at her altars, communed within her walls, and constrained all his followers to do likewise. Indeed, Methodism, during the first third of its history, was little more than a society of English churchmen banded together for mutual edification, for social prayer, and conference, and singing, and the study of the Scriptures. Wesley would hold no service, nor would he suffer any of his preachers to do so, in any place at the same hour of the church service, if that church itself would hold all who wanted to worship. Accordingly, the first Methodists held their services at an early hour in the morning, or late at night, and during the canonical hours would be found in the parish churches. They had no separate communion season, save when the rector was of scandalous life, or when the communicants could not be accommodated within consecrated walls.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In 1786, when Wesley was eighty-three years old, the Methodists at Deptford requested to be allowed to have service in the Methodist chapel at the same time that there was service in the church. "It is easy to see," he tells them, "that this would be a formal separation from the Church. We fixed both our morning and evening service, all over England, with this very design, — that those of the Church, if they chose it, might attend both the one and the other. But to fix it at the same hour is obliging



But we must return to Oxford, where Methodism is now being born. These four young men, to whom others were gradually drawn, — George Whitefield among them, — had for their ideal, *simple fidelity*. They were orthodox, at least in the depths of their own consciousness. All that they purposed was honestly to put their orthodoxy in practice, to be conscientious in life, in thought, speech, behavior, in study, in conversation, in society, and in solitude. There should not be a rubric of the Church, nor a demand of the moral law, which they would not help each other to obey, and diligently endeavor to obey themselves in the spirit and mind of Christ. And the effect of all this upon Oxford was much like that which was produced by Christ and his disciples at Jerusalem; their hours of devotion and of study were faithfully kept, and men around called them Methodists, because they lived methodically. They had their plans of study for every day in the week. They rose early to get additional time for charitable work. They visited the workhouse and the jail to instruct the prisoners. They established schools for poor children, and taught them. They refused to spend money in selfish indulgence, that they might help the needy. They sought out those treatises for leisure reading which would aid them to live in the Spirit. They exercised a brotherly and affectionate care for each other's highest welfare. They sought to win young students around them from vicious courses. They were simply what in these days would be called a Young Men's Christian Association. In all this Wesley was the leader and exemplar to them to separate either from the Church or us, and this I judge to be not only inexpedient but totally unlawful for me to do." — Tyerman, vol. iii., p. 488.

whom they all looked. He was a pattern of diligence, of self-denial, of generosity. One year his income was thirty pounds; he lived on twenty-eight pounds, and gave away forty shillings. The next year he received sixty pounds; he still lived on twenty-eight pounds, and gave away thirty-two pounds. The third year he received ninety pounds, still lived on twenty-eight pounds, and gave away sixty-two pounds. The fourth year he received one hundred and twenty pounds, lived as before on twenty-eight pounds, and gave away all the rest. One cold winter's day he met a poor girl who was a pupil in one of their schools. She seemed nearly frozen. He said to her, "You seem half frozen; have you nothing to wear but that linen gown?" "Sir, this is all I have." He puts his hand to his pocket, but there is no money there. He goes sadly to his room, and his walls that are hung with pictures seem to upbraid him. He strips them down, saying to himself, "How can thy Master say to thee, Well done, good and faithful servant! Thou hast adorned thy walls with the money which might have screened this poor creature from the cold! O Justice! O Mercy! Are not these pictures the blood of this poor maid?"<sup>1</sup> And this was no spurt of generosity. When he was an old man past his three-score years and ten, and his Methodism had become triumphant through the kingdom, an order passed the House of Lords that the commissioners of excise send out circular letters

<sup>1</sup> We are reminded of the tender-heartedness of a like-minded man, Charles Kingsley, who, when the famine was raging in India, pushed his plate aside as the head-lines of the morning paper fell under his eye, exclaiming, "Take it away! Take it away! I cannot eat while my brothers are dying by thousands of hunger!"

to all persons suspected of possessing plate, and to those who have not regularly paid duty on the same. John Wesley received a circular. This was his reply : —

“SIR, — I have two silver tea-spoons in London, and two in Bristol. This is all the plate I have at present : and I shall not buy any more while so many around me want bread.

“I am, sir, your most humble servant,  
“JOHN WESLEY.”

Such, in a very meagre outline, was Methodism in its earliest aspects at Oxford, when various circumstances began to arise, in the providence of God, for transplanting it to a wider sphere. It looked at first more like destruction than transplantation. Wesley's father was an old man, and wanted his son to succeed him as rector of Epworth. Wesley himself preferred to stay and continue his work in Oxford. But neither purpose was in the divine plan. Another applicant secured the rectory, for which Wesley was not sorry. About this time General Oglethorpe was engaged in his benevolent designs for the colonization of Georgia. Oglethorpe, being a man of generous means and large influence, had been endeavoring to mitigate the harshness of those laws which imposed imprisonment for what were only technical crimes. Every year thousands of men were imprisoned for the simple crime of being poor. A small debt was sufficient to keep a man in jail for life. Oglethorpe at length secured legislation which liberated a multitude of these unfortunates, and took still further steps to procure a settlement for them on the Savannah River. At this time, also, there had been going on in Germany a religious revival in

which thousands of persons had been converted, who were forthwith subjected to the most terrible persecution by the Catholic authorities. To these victims of almost unheard of cruelties Oglethorpe also offered an asylum in his new colony, which was gratefully accepted. A company of Scottish Highlanders, and still further a band of Moravians, speedily followed. So Georgia was settled, taking its name from George II., who gave it its charter in 1732.

Wesley's intense earnestness and spirit of self-sacrifice had come to Oglethorpe's ears, and the General persuaded him to go to his new colony, holding forth as the grand inducement the opportunity, which now presented, of Christianizing the native races of the American Continent. And for two years Wesley tarried here in America, without at all being able to accomplish the purpose which had brought him. He Christianized few or no Indians, and the strange mixture of social and religious elements which made up the colony did not receive his labor kindly, and he returned to England. He was to do a greater work for America than he had ever dreamed of, but in no way that man could then have anticipated: by indirect influence, and largely after he himself should have passed away from earth. He was brought here, in this strange episode of his experience, to gain what he afterwards called his conversion. It threw him into contact with some pious Moravians, from whose conversation he was led to question the depth and value of his own religious experience. There was a fearful storm at sea on the passage out; and while all were expecting to go to the bottom, and the English were trembling and terrified, the Germans were singing their hymns to God with uplifted faces and calm

hearts, and Wesley discovered that his own trust was exceedingly defective. He longed for this open secret of the Moravians. When he returned to London he sought the Moravian society there, and they instructed him in the way of God more perfectly. He learned the lesson, and to his former unreserved consecration of himself to God he now added that constant and unbroken peace which passeth understanding. It was a long and roundabout journey for such an issue, when the Word was so nigh him. He found not what he sought, but what he found was worth the cost. This was no doubt the completion of his equipment for his grand, lifelong, apostolic work. Out of this new experience there was to come a new plank for the great Methodist platform, a plank which Wesley magnified, perhaps unduly, because of the vast change which it effected in his own feelings rather than in his principles; which in later times he and some of his followers insisted upon under the erroneous name of perfection; which has subjected them to unmerited ridicule, but which is no empty tenet of enthusiasm, but a veritable experience; which Christians of every name believe in, and which it is every Christian's privilege to attain and duty to seek — the repose and the energy of faith.

And now, at thirty-five years of age (1738), he is in England again absolutely without any plan of life, save that he believes all the world to be his parish, and that he must preach the gospel wherever he can get a chance. He has not the remotest idea of building up a system, but simply to do the work of the present hour as God leads the way. He is a priest of the Church of England, and the highest of high churchmen, our ritualistic brothers of to-day not more so. Wherever there is a pulpit of the Church of Eng-

land open to him he fills it. But his heart is ablaze with the love of Christ and the love of men, and he is possessed of a passionate desire to proclaim in all places his new-found doctrine of present salvation by faith alone, and the holiness of life consequent thereupon. Further than this he does not plan or look. In less than one year from this time he will be launched upon his career as the Apostle of Methodism.

The man's intense eagerness, his theory of instantaneous conversion to God, and the remarkable spiritual results which seem to be immediately consequent upon his preaching, do not particularly commend him to the high and dry ministers of the Established Church; and gradually the pulpits of the establishment close to him, as certain flowers are said to shut up their petals at sunrise. But George Whitefield, one of the old Oxford club, has been preaching at Bristol, and sends to Wesley to come and help him. He goes, not doubting the will of God; but what a shock to this persistent high churchman. Whitefield is preaching in no church, in no conventicle even, but, in what seems to Wesley a most disorderly and unauthorized way, in the open fields, to thousands of people at a time. "I could scarce reconcile myself," he says, "at first, to this strange way of preaching in the fields; having been all my life, till very lately, so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin if it had not been done in a church." Strange that the good man had never thought what ecclesiastical walls sheltered Him who spake as never man spake, and the band of fishermen and tent-makers, who after Him, published his gospel from Britain to India. But what scruples can stand against the emergency? Whitefield

must leave; here are thousands that no edifice could hold, even if the churches were not, by a kind of tacit consent, closed to them. He had to preach in Georgia in the open air. Why not here? He does preach. The Rubicon is crossed. The flaming torch is lighted to burn through England henceforth for more than forty years; to be taken from Wesley's dying hand to flame through all the world till there shall be no more night and the nations shall need no candle, neither light of the sun. He is here in Bristol for nine months,—such a nine months as Bristol never saw before; no! nor England, nor the world since the day of Pentecost.

Wesley's notions of propriety were destined to be still further shocked. Among the multitudes that thronged around him, strange physical demonstrations began to appear. They shocked even Whitefield when he heard of them, and he remonstrated with Wesley for seeming to permit or encourage them. Men were smitten by his words as a field of standing corn by a tempest. Intense physical agony prostrated them upon the ground. They stood trembling, with fixed eyeballs, staring as though they were looking into eternal horrors. Some, who seemed utterly incapable of anything like enthusiasm, were struck as dead. Others beat their breasts and begged for forgiveness for their sins. Others were actually torn and maimed in unconscious convulsions. The story of the demoniac in the gospels was, to all appearances, realized over and over. And again, under his assurances of full forgiveness and free salvation, the storm would give way to calm, and these same persons would be at peace, clothed, and in their right minds. Wesley was helpless; never was more honest, straightforward, ingen-

uous work. He was himself amazed, startled, almost terrified, but "I have come to the conclusion," he says, "that we must all suffer God to carry on his own work in the way that pleaseth Him." I am not anxious to account for all this. Wesley's attitude was the right one. There is one simple general principle with which we are all acquainted which seems sufficient to cover all the cases, namely, that every thought, every emotion, every mental experience infallibly registers itself upon the physical nature. It is the law of smiles and tears, of groans and laughter, and of all involuntary gesture; the law under which we all are, whether awake or asleep, listening to a story, a song, or a sermon. The action of the law is modified, of course, by the quality of the natures upon which it works. Wesley was preaching to men and women who were densely ignorant, in many cases, of the nature of sin, and of the story of God's redemptive mercy. His words to them were as truly the opening of an Apocalypse as when John saw the vision of his Lord, and *fell at his feet as dead*.

And this Bristol experience was repeated, over and over again, through all England, and Ireland, and Wales, and to some extent in Scotland.

Methodism now (1739) began to develop, as by some inherent law, into an organization. In this one year two or three great steps are visible. Wesley sent out his first lay preacher. It was simply and naturally an expansion that is always to be looked for when men have learned the real meaning and power of the gospel. They must tell it. But even this was, at first, a shock to Wesley's old high church notions. Now as before, however, he saw that human notions of order and form must give way to higher necessity.



He would not ordain, he would not undertake to confer any clerical prerogatives, he would not break any known rule of the Church of England as by law established. He simply encouraged men to tell the glorious truths which they understood and felt. Such was the beginning of that system of itinerancy by which, from first to last, Wesley had seven hundred men under his direction, penetrating to every remote village of England. This same year too was built the first chapel, the old Foundry in London, mother of all the Methodist churches in the world; and the first Methodist society was organized. These societies were simple companies based upon the plan of the old Oxford club, and for the same purpose of mutual helpfulness and doing good to others in every possible way. They multiplied. Everywhere he went a society was formed. But how could their permanent welfare be secured? Who should watch over them while he was moving about from place to place, absent at times from any given place long months together? A happy accident reveals the method, a method which has been one great source of strength to Methodism from that day to this. The Bristol people (in 1742) were devising ways and means to pay for their chapel. One proposes that the society shall be divided into groups of twelve, and over each group some one shall be appointed to collect from every member a penny a week. Wesley approves, and with his keen intuition he at once sees, and seizes upon, the plan for high spiritual ends. Each group shall be a little class, and the leader, who takes a penny a week, shall also keep account of each member's way of life and spiritual welfare. So the class-meeting was born.

I cannot go on from this point to detail Wesley's

grand work. My object has been chiefly to give the story of his relation to the rise of a great reformatory movement. When he was but thirty-six years old, he had already leavened, with a redemptive force, the social life of his century. His apostolate continues through more than fifty years. The story which St. Paul gives of his labors and sufferings in the 11th chapter of his Second Epistle to the Corinthians might have been almost literally adopted by Wesley as the record of his own : —

“Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool,) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

“Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.

“Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

“In journeyings often, in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

“In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

“Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.”

Indeed, I think that the story of the English Apostle is the more wonderful. There must be many a field in Great Britain thick-sown with stones which have been thrown at John Wesley and his proto-Methodists. Traveling from four to five thousand miles every year, and preaching from two to four times nearly

every day to audiences of thousands ; often disturbed by mobs of men more savage than wild beasts ; keeping an eye on all his preachers, and receiving their reports ; starting a publishing house, and carrying it on, that his people everywhere might have wholesome intellectual fare within their scanty means ; taking no money but just what would suffice for his bare expenses ; stopping for no storms or floods, fires or frosts ; reading and studying on horseback, and answering innumerable assaults through the press, from bishops, archbishops, and ecclesiastical foes of all ranks ; compiling grammars in Greek, and Hebrew, and French, and Latin, for his students ; editing, writing, translating, or abridging not less than two hundred different publications ; eager only, in it all, to save men and to extend the kingdom of God. Half a million souls were to be numbered as his adherents at the close of that fifty years ; and outside of this, a vast multitude that no man can number, morally and spiritually benefited by his movement. He is, I think, the finest illustration of consecrated, unselfish, whole-hearted devotion, for fifty solid years of this old world's dark history, that the Church of Christ has ever offered to the vision of men, perhaps to that of angels.

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